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• News Digest for January

AFRICA

South Africa: amnesty plea from Biko killers 41430
• also including developments in rebellion in easter Zaïre • return of Biwott to Kenyan Cabinet • intensification of war in southern Sudan • legislative elections in The Gambia and Gabon

AMERICAS

United States: inauguration of Clinton 41435
• also including out of court settlement in Mulroney libel case in Canada • continued deadlock in hostage crisis in Peru • announcement of state of economic emergency in Colombia • Cabinet reshuffle in Guatemala • inauguration of a new government in Nicaragua

ASIA-PACIFIC

South Korea: popular protests over labour law reforms 41443
• also including developments in Japanese corruption and fraud scandals • China: concern over Deng's health • resignation of Taiwan Governor • Hong Kong: membership of Tung's Executive Council • formation of National Security Council in Pakistan • new government in Nepal • Singapore: general election • ethnic unrest in Indonesia • Afghanistan: continued advance by Talibaan militia • election of President in Marshall Islands

EUROPE

Bulgaria: political and economic crisis 41452
• also including collapse of pyramid finance schemes in Albania • continuing anti-government protests in Serbia • formation of Bosnian Cabinet • Slovenia: re-election of Prime Minister • Russia: attempt to remove Yeltsin because of ill-health • new government in Belarus • political instability in Latvia • Cyprus: missile crisis • French efforts to trace Jewish assets • new Austrian President • anti-government protests in Belgium

MIDDLE EAST - ARAB WORLD

Israeli-Palestinian agreement in Hebron 41469
• also including corruption allegations in Israel • bomb attack in Syria • Iraq: turmoil within President Saddam's family • Qatar: reconciliation between Amir and Shaikh Khalifa • Algeria: Ramadan unrest • Libya: execution of alleged spies

INTERNATIONAL

UN: Secretariat appointments 41474
• also including collapse of war crimes' trial in the UK • oil spill off Japanese coast

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AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

Confession of Biko killers

On Jan. 28 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, investigating political crimes committed by security forces and opposition groups under the apartheid system [see p. 41398], confirmed newspaper reports that five former security police officers had confessed to the 1977 murder of the leading Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko [see p. 28663] and had made a formal amnesty application.

Biko's death in police custody had provoked a storm of protest, both in South Africa and worldwide. It was widely accepted that he was beaten and tortured during interrogation at the security police headquarters in Port Elizabeth before being driven naked in the back of a police vehicle to Pretoria where he died. A 15-day inquest into his death controversially found that his massive head injuries had been caused accidentally when police had attempted to restrain him.

On Jan. 28 Francois van der Merwe, a lawyer acting for the five officers, appealed for public understanding for his clients. He claimed that they had "acted in the belief that they were acting to protect a system" and that they had behaved "within the culture of the government of the day". He said that they would be seeking an amnesty in exchange for a full account of Biko's death. He identified his clients as the former Eastern Cape security branch commander Col. (retd) Harold Snyman, Lt.-Col. (retd) Giddeon Niewoudt, Warrant Officer (retd) Ruben Marx, Capt. (retd) Daantjie Siebert, and Warrant Officer (retd) Johan Beneke.

The Commission regarded their amnesty application as a "major breakthrough", believing that it strengthened the Commission's claim to be a better vehicle for addressing crimes committed under apartheid than the criminal courts. However, the family of Biko was reported to be angry at the possibility that his killers could remain unpunished. In 1996 the family had been amongst those who had unsuccessfully applied to the Constitutional Court to have the Commission stripped of its power to grant amnesties. The petitioners had argued that the authority to protect human rights abusers from prosecution and civil-damages claims meant that they were denied the opportunity to obtain justice through the courts [see pp. 41030; 41175].

Inkatha resignations

The Inkatha Freedom Party was thrown into turmoil on Jan. 27 by the resignation of three senior officials. Frank Mdlalose, the organization's national chairman and the Premier of Kwazulu-Natal province; Ziba Jiyane, Inkatha secretary-general; and Musa Myeni, Inkatha leader in the Gauteng legislature, resigned during a 15-hour meeting of the party's national council. The three were regarded as moderates, and their departure followed persistent reports of tensions with Inkatha president and national Minister of Home Affairs Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Ben Ngubane, the Kwazulu-Natal finance minister, was appointed as acting national chairman. He was also expected to succeed Mdlalose as provincial premier. Although Jiyane was expected to remain in office until July, his day-to-day duties were to be assumed by his deputy Zakhele Khumalo, who commanded a loyal following among Inkatha traditionalists. In October Khumalo had been acquitted with former Defence Minister Magnus Malan of murder charges relating to the 1987 killing of supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) [see p. 41304].

Some observers believed that the resignations threatened the fragile peace process in Kwazulu-Natal. Earlier in the month the ANC was believed to have proposed special amnesty arrangements for the perpetrators of political violence in the troubled province. According to press reports on Jan. 6, the ANC put the proposal to President Nelson Mandela; it included extending the amnesty deadline for apartheid crimes beyond May 10, 1994 [see p. 41398]. However, on Jan. 8 Buthelezi rejected the deal which he said "obfuscate[d]" personal culpability and political responsibility. He said that amnesty was "incompatible" with conditions on the ground where war was continuing.

Arms row

South Africa reacted angrily on Jan. 14 to threats from the USA that it might cut off aid if the government sold arms to Syria.

Parks Mankahlana, a spokesman in the President's Office, described the USA as "bullies", and declared that "We are a sovereign country and don't like being shouted at." His comments followed remarks made on Jan. 13 by Nicholas Burns, a US State Department spokesman, that the USA was deeply concerned about a possible arms sale to Syria, a "country that support[ed] terrorism". Syria's request to purchase a tank fire-control system estimated to be worth R3 billion (US$1.00=R4.68 as at Jan. 10) was first considered by the South African Cabinet in December, but officials emphasized that no decision had been taken. The row came at a time of growing tension between South Africa and the USA over Mandela's refusal to sever ties with countries, such as Cuba and Libya, which had supported the ANC during the struggle against apartheid [see p. 40939].

Arrest of bombers

On Jan. 6-7 police arrested three white men in connection with three bomb explosions at Rustenburg, 160 km north-west of Johannesburg, on Jan. 5. The bombs damaged a mosque and a post office both Muslim-owned. The three men were identified as Abraham Myburgh, Jan De Wet and Nicholas Barnard. All were members of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) who had escaped from prison in March 1996 while awaiting sentences on 20 counts of murder and 46 counts of attempted murder arising from a 1994 bombing campaign [see p. 41030].

The police linked the explosions to an attack on Dec. 24 against a supermarket in Worcester, near Cape Town. On Jan. 3 the Boer Attack Troops (BAT), a hitherto unknown group, claimed responsibility for the incident and warned that "for every Boer murdered hundreds of you anti-Christs will die from our deeds".

■ Last article p. 41398; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Fighting between French troops and mutineers

French troops on Jan. 5 shot dead 10 army mutineers and captured 30 others in clashes at the Kasai military camp and in other areas of Bangui (the country's capital) where rebel soldiers remained at large following the latest army mutiny which had begun on Nov. 15, 1996 [see p. 41353].

The French action was apparently taken in revenge for the killing of two French officers who had reportedly intervened in a street disturbance on Jan. 4 in which three other people were also killed. The French personnel were reportedly shot in the back by mutineers as they left the scene. Observers noted that the French response—which involved armoured cars, rocket-launchers and helicopter gunships—indicated a marked change of tactics from the hitherto relatively low-key policing which had characterized the role of French military units since their initial intervention to quell an army uprising in April 1996 [see p. 41033]. The French military presence had subsequently been reinforced following a second mutiny in May [see pp. 41080-81].

Further fighting between French units and mutineers was reported on Jan. 17, with one rebel sol-

dier said to have been killed and another captured; there were no French casualties.

■ Last article p. 41353; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

ZAÏRE

Loss of momentum in eastern rebellion

Evidence began emeging in early January that the large-scale uprising seen in the eastern area of the country—near the Ugandan, Rwandan and Burundian borders—was slowing down. After several months of sweeping gains [see pp. 41302; 41350; 41399], there were reports that the rebels had begun fighting amongst themselves.

The rebels, broadly grouped into the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre (ADFL), were described by the *Financial Times* on Jan. 17 as "a marriage of convenience between disciplined Rwandan-trained Banyamalenge Tutsis, rebels from Shaba and Kasai provinces and local Mai-Mai warriors traditionally hostile to Tutsis". The Zaïrian government alleged that the ADFL was backed by Uganda and Rwanda. Independent reports said that Laurent Kabila, chairman of the ADFL, appeared to be funding the rebellion from the assets of banks seized by his fighters, and through the expectation of wealth from captured gold-mines in the area.

On Jan. 2 the rebels had seized the north-eastern town of Bunia and its nearby gold-mines after a 12-hour battle with government forces. At this point, they appeared to control a 600-km strip of land along the three borders, an area which they named as the "Democratic Congo". While the ADFL forces appeared to control Walikale, 130km west of Goma, it remained unclear how close they had come to their proclaimed objective, Kisangani, 600 km west of Goma.

Clear evidence of serious dissension within the ADFL came on Jan. 7 when Star Radio, a mouthpiece for the organization, announced that the ADFL leadership had ordered the arrest of the leaders of the Mai-Mai warriors. This followed reports that the Mai-Mai had attacked ADFL forces at several locations. Some weeks earlier, Kabila had ordered the Mai-Mai warriors, mainly undisciplined teenagers, to be disarmed after reports that they had committed acts of violence against local people. On Jan. 21, ADFL military commander, André Ngandu Kissassé, was reported to have been killed by Mai-Mai forces at Mutembo.

Government's use of foreign mercenaries

French press reports of Jan. 7 stated that French former senior officers were recruiting a "white legion" of mercenaries to fight alongside Zaïrian government forces. Those officers allegedly involved included Col. Alain Le Carro, former head of security at the Elysée Palace under the late President François Mitterrand, and a gendarmerie officer, also formerly serving at the presidency, Robert Montoya.

According to these reports, a dozen or so former French officers were already in northern Zaïre with 300-400 men, including Angolan, Belgian, French, South African and UK mercenaries. Subsequent reports also referred to the presence of Serbian and Croatian mercenaries. These forces were reportedly being paid directly by President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Fighting intensified towards the end of January. The mercenary force was reported to have led an attempt on Jan. 25-26 to retake Walikale. The body of an unidentified white man was said to have been taken to Kisangani, but claims of heavy casualties by both sides, and the Zaïrian army's claim to have captured the town, were not verified. Kabila claimed on Jan. 31 that his forces had blocked the mercenary-backed Zaïrian advance and "wiped it out".

On Jan. 30 the Zaïrian government accused Uganda of invading its territory, alleging that some 2,000 Ugandan soldiers were heading for Shaba province from the rebel-held town of Fizi, 36 km south-west of the border. The Ugandan authorities described the accusation as "laughable". The same day, a UN official was quoted as saying that rebel forces advancing on Shaba had seized Lulimba, 60 km south of Fizi.

Mobutu's return to France

Three weeks after returning to Zaïre [see p. 41399] from convalescence in France following prostate cancer surgery, President Mobutu arrived at his villa in the south of France on Jan. 9 and underwent minor surgery in Monaco the following day.

■ Last article p. 41399; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

RWANDA

Imposition of first death sentences for genocide

A tribunal of three judges in the south-eastern town of Kibungu passed death sentences on Jan. 3 against Deogratias Bizimana and Egide Gatanazi, having found both men guilty of committing genocide and crimes against humanity during the 1994 massacres.

The condemned men, both of whom were Hutus, had not been represented by lawyers during their trial, and had not been permitted to call witnesses for their defence. They were given 15 days in which to appeal against their sentences, which were otherwise due to be carried out by firing squad. On Jan. 14 Amnesty International, the London-based human rights organization, questioned the fairness of the trials.

Three other Hutu men were sentenced to death on similar charges on Jan. 17 by a court in southern Butare. It was estimated that a further 90,000 people were awaiting trial in Rwandan prisons in connection with genocide; of these, some 2,000 faced capital charges.

The trial for genocide of Jean-Paul Akayesu, former mayor of Taba, at the UN-organized International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, [see pp. 41259-60; 41351], resumed on Jan. 9 only to be once again adjourned after 31 witnesses from Rwanda failed to attend because of visa problems.

A total of 21 people had been indicted by the tribunal, of whom only seven had been detained. However, many observers expressed the view that the tribunal's proceedings were in danger of collapse because of administrative lapses and misconduct. Fresh doubts over its effectiveness arose in the ensuing days with reports that many witnesses were afraid to appear because of intimidation. A Tutsi shopkeeper who had been called as a witness at Akayesu's trial was reported to have been murdered by gunmen, together with his 12-year-old daughter and nine other people.

Army reprisals after Hutu murders

Hutu extremists were reported on Jan. 20 to have unleashed a new wave of killings around Ruhengeri, in north-west Rwanda. Their victims, reported to number at least 60 people, included Tutsi survivors of the 1994 massacres, and three Spanish aid workers attached to the Spanish branch of the medical charity Médecins sans Frontières.

Vice-President Paul Kagame said on Jan. 23 that the army had killed 80 people in operations against Hutu extremists in the north-west since the Ruhengeri murders. Evidence was reported of indiscriminate killing by some soldiers.

■ Last article p. 41303; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

BURUNDI

Massacres by army

There were persistent reports during January of attacks by the Tutsi-dominated army on Hutus. On Jan. 10, soldiers shot dead 126 Hutu refugees expelled from Tanzania as they attempted to escape from a detention centre in the north-east province of Muyinga. The army admitted the killings, which were condemned by army spokesman Lt.-Col. Isaie Nbizi. He announced that seven soldiers had been arrested and would be tried by a military court in connection with the incident. This was confirmed by government spokesman Jean-Luc Ndizeye, who stated that an investigation into the circumstances of the killings was underway. The army had been accused of many massacres in the past [for most recent reports see pp. 41399-400], but this was the first occasion that it had admitted to a mass killing.

Citing witnesses who refused to be identified, a Reuters report on Jan. 24 claimed that the army had also led Tutsi civilians in the slaughter of some 400 people in two incidents in Muramvya province on Jan. 5. A total of 304 people, many of them women, children and the elderly, were killed with machetes and cudgels after soldiers had driven them from their homes. About 100 people who had fled were later caught and killed with bayonets and clubs.

■ **Last article pp. 41399-400; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

KENYA

Government changes

President Daniel arap Moi carried out a major Cabinet reshuffle on Jan. 15. The most significant of the changes was the return to government of former minister Nicholas K. Biwott.

Biwott, had been dismissed from the Cabinet in November 1991 following allegations of corruption, and having been named as the prime suspect in the 1990 murder of Foreign Minister Robert Ouko [see pp. 37239; 38563]. One of Moi's closest political allies, with extensive business interests, Biwott had nevertheless remained an influential figure in Kenyan politics. Observers believed that his re-appointment was likely to elicit a negative response from foreign donors who had demanded that the government make efforts to eradicate corruption.

Other Cabinet changes included the dismissal of Kipkalya Kones as Minister of State in the President's Office and the effective demotion of William ole Ntimama, who moved from Local Government to Home Affairs and National Heritage, and of Simeon Nyachae, who had controlled the key Agriculture portfolio. All three had supported moves within the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) for greater party democracy.

Posts affected in the reshuffle were as follows:

***Nicholas K. Biwott** Minister of State in the President's Office

***J. K. Koech** Minister of State in the President's Office

+**Darius Mbela** Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing

+**Simeon Nyachae** Land Reclamation, Regional and Water Development

+**Kirugi M'Kindia** Energy

+**Joshua Angatia** Commerce and Industry

***P. K. Momanyi** Tourism

+**Gen. Jackson Mulinge** Health

+**Francis Lotodo** Local Government

+**William ole Ntimama** Home Affairs and National Heritage

+**Noah Katana Ngala** Lands and Settlement

+**Hussein Maalima Mohammed** Research, Technical Training and Technology

*New appointment.

+Altered responsibilities.

Torture accusations

In a report published on Jan. 7 Amnesty International (AI) said that the Kenyan government had failed to halt the widespread torture of male, female and child detainees.

AI said that the torture, including electric shocks and sexual abuse, was being inflicted by the police, security forces and members of the youth wing of KANU. It rejected government denials of the practice, and claimed that torture was "endemic and systematic throughout the country".

■ **Last article p. 41356; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

SOMALIA

Establishment of National Salvation Council

Representatives of 26 Somali factions met in Sodere, near Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Jan. 3, to form a National Salvation Council. The move was a prelude to the formation of a national unity government and the attempt to "create the conditions for peace and stability".

The meeting elected 41 Council members and an 11-member national executive committee. The key task of the Council was identified as undertaking "activities for the establishment of a provisional central government". These included drafting a transitional national charter and the convening of a national reconciliation conference.

On Jan. 9 Osman Ali Ato's United Somali Congress-Somali National Alliance (USC-SNA) and Ali Mahdi Mohammed's Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA) expressed their support for the Sodere meeting and the Council. However, their principal rival, Hussein Mohammed Aydid, on Jan. 4 rejected the meeting as "sabotage". He described it as the product of "plots and intrigues being hatched by neo-colonialism". He also criticized Ethiopia for hosting the meeting, and called on the international community to intervene in order to end alleged Ethiopian aggression.

■ **Last article p. 41356; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

ETHIOPIA

Death of Asfa Wossen

Crown Prince Merid Azmatch Asfa Wossen Haile Selassie, surviving son of the late Emperor Haile Selassie, died at Fairfax, Virginia, USA, on Jan. 17 aged 80, and was to be buried in Addis Ababa in early February.

Asfa Wossen had left Ethiopia in 1973, a year before his father's regime—together with the country's ancient monarchy—was overthrown by a military coup. He declared himself Emperor in 1989 while in exile in London, taking the name of Amha Selassie and naming his son, Zere-Yakob Asfa Wossen, as Crown Prince. The declaration attracted little attention, however, and few observers were said to believe that the monarchy would be restored.

Defection of football players

Fourteen members of the Ethiopian national football team, together with the team manager and a doctor, requested political asylum in Italy on Jan. 22. The defections occurred in Rome as the team was en route from Addis Ababa to Casablanca to play Morocco in an African Cup match. Five of the players later withdrew their request and asked to return to Ethiopia.

■ **Last article pp. 41355-56; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

SUDAN

Intensification of war in the south

There were indications of a major upsurge in the war between southern rebels and the

army in early January when Ethiopian officials reported on Jan. 8 that thousands of refugees were entering western districts to escape the "civil strife, famine, and mass destruction of residential areas [and] crop and livestock looting in the Blue Nile region of Sudan".

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated on Jan. 11 that some 4,000 refugees were being cared for at the western Ethiopian border town of Asosa, and that a further 15,000 were waiting to cross the border. They were reported to be "in a desperate state of famine".

In a statement on Radio Omdurman on Jan. 13, President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir called for a Jihad (holy war) against "the enemies of Islam". This followed reports that the 30,000-strong Sudan People's Liberation Front (SPLA), the main rebel grouping led by John Garang, had seized Kurmuk and Qeissan. The towns were 600 km south-east of Khartoum, and just south of the Damazin hydroelectric power station which supplied 80 per cent of Khartoum's power. An SPLA spokesman described the latest rebel successes as "a turning point" in the 13-year war.

The rebel gains put the government under renewed pressure as they coincided with the growing threat posed by the SPLA's allies, the Eritrea-based rebels of the Northern Democratic Alliance (NDA), to the road link between the capital and Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The SPLA-NDA alliance had become effective since the arrival in Eritrea in December of Sadiq al-Mahdi, a former Prime Minister and leader of the Ummah party [see p. 41401].

A government statement on Jan. 13 accused Ethiopia of attacking Kurmuk and Qeissan, alleging that the area had come under intense artillery fire from across the border. Although the Ethiopian authorities denied the allegation, the Sudanese statement called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss the situation.

On Jan. 14, Radio Omdurman announced that Khartoum University was being closed to enable students to join the army and fight "Ethiopian aggression". Subsequently, Sudanese army reinforcements were reported to have arrived in Blue Nile province. On Jan. 17 the Sudanese government denied that the strategic town of Maban, in southern Blue Nile province, had fallen to rebels. The precise position remained confused, with foreign aid workers reporting that government forces were bombing and burning property in the area. Garang claimed on Jan. 21 that SPLA troops had killed 300 government soldiers at Abu Shaneina, just south of Damazin, and another 150 at al-Keili, further to the south. Government sources denied the claims.

Bashir alleged on Jan. 20 that rebel forces were massing along Sudan's southern border with Uganda, and urged the Ugandan government to prevent them from launching attacks against Sudan. On Jan. 26 Sudanese forces reportedly attacked a rebel base near the Ugandan border. President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda on Jan. 27 called on the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to declare the Sudanese civil war a colonial conflict, thereby permitting other African countries to provide material support to the rebels.

■ **Last article p. 41401; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

CHAD

Allegations of summary executions

The International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) expressed concern on Jan. 10 over the recent increase in human-rights violations in Chad. According to the FIDH, scores of people had been summarily executed since mid-November when, it claimed, the gendarmerie had been issued with instructions to "shoot-to-kill" those caught committing crimes.

The organization produced a copy of a government order, allegedly issued to security forces on Nov. 14, which told officers that "robbers must not be the object of normal procedures [of arrest]. If one is caught in the act, you must proceed with his physical elimination."

The incidence of crime was a growing problem in Chad. On Nov. 26 President Idriss Deby had declared that N'djamena (the country's capital) was being held hostage by organized gangs, and had expressed his frustration at the justice system which "systematically freed" criminals.

■ **Last articles pp. 41307; 41356; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

NIGER

Niamey demonstration - Arrest of opposition figures

Riot police used tear-gas to disperse a large anti-government demonstration in central Niamey on Jan. 11. Angry demonstrators, demanding free access to the public media, then set up barricades of burning tyres at several key crossroads, severely disrupting the capital's traffic. According to official figures 11 people were injured in the clashes and around 50 arrested.

Speaking on television on Jan. 11 Prime Minister Amadou Boubacar Cisse denounced the protest as part of an opposition plan to "destabilize the country". On Jan. 13 President Ibrahim Mainassara declared that there was "no room in democracy for disorder".

The Interior Ministry confirmed on Jan. 14 that three opposition leaders had been formally arrested the previous day, having been under house arrest since Jan. 11. They were former President Mahamane Ousmane, Tandja Mamadou and Mahamadou Issoufou; all three had stood against Mainassara in the July presidential elections [see p. 41178].

■ **Last article pp. 41400-01; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

MALI

Announcement of electoral timetable

On Jan. 17 details of the timetable for the forthcoming elections were announced, with legislative elections due to be held over two rounds on March 9 and March 23. Presidential polls were scheduled for May 4, with May 18 set aside for a run-off contest, should it be required. The elections were to be supervised by an Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI).

The National Assembly had approved a new electoral code on Jan. 9, and at the same time sanctioned an increase in the number of deputies from 116 to 147. The opposition alliance, the Rally of Patriotic Forces (RFP), had announced that it would contest the elections, even though it rejected the new electoral code on the grounds that it had been adopted with insufficient consultation. The rival Front for Change and Democracy (FCD) opposition grouping had voted for the new code.

■ **Last article pp. 41402; 41306; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

MAURITANIA

Government changes

A Cabinet reshuffle on Jan. 6 saw the dismissal of Foreign Minister Lemerabottt Sidi Mahmoud Ould Cheikh Ahmed and Interior Minister Dah Ould Abdeljelil. No explanation was given for the changes.

The portfolios affected were as follows:

***Sidi Ould Khliva** Foreign Affairs and Co-operation

+**Baba Ould Alewa** Interior, Post and Telecommunication

***Sgheyer Ould M'Bare** National Education

+**Baba Ould Sidi** Civil Service

+**Sow Abou Demba** Trade and Tourism

+**Mohammed Mahmoud Ould Dahmane** Health and Social Affairs

*New appointment.

+Altered responsibilities.

■ **Last article p. 41306; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

THE GAMBIA

Legislative elections

Legislative elections, postponed from December [see p. 41355], were held on Jan. 2 and resulted in a victory for President Yahya Jammeh's Patriotic Alliance for Reorientation and Construction (PARC). The elections marked the return of civilian rule following the 1994 military coup [see p. 40091]. [For constitutional referendum in August 1996 and the presidential election in September, see pp. 41216-17; 41258.]

The PARC won 33 of the 45 elected seats, giving it more than the two-thirds majority required to make constitutional changes. (The Constitution provided for the president to appoint a further four members, one of whom would serve as Speaker.) In five constituencies, its candidates did not face challengers. In most constituencies the opposition put up a single candidate, forming a united front around the United Democratic Party, led by Ousainou Darboe, who had been Jammeh's nearest rival in the September presidential elections [see p. 41258]. The turnout was estimated at 73 per cent.

Gambian legislative election results

Party	*Seats*
Patriotic Alliance for Reorientation and Construction	33
United Democratic Party	7
National Reconciliation Party	2
Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism	1
independents	2
Total elective seats	45

The first session of parliament was held on Jan. 16 when Mustapha Wadda, hitherto secretary-general to the government and head of the civil service, was elected as the Speaker.

■ **Last article p. 41355; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

LIBERIA

Difficulties of disarmament process

The disarming of fighters belonging to the various warring factions progressed slowly during January, amidst growing doubts that the process could be completed by the Jan. 31 deadline laid down by the August Abuja 1996 peace agreement [see p. 41217].

Responding to a public outcry over the low turnout of fighters presenting themselves at the 13 demobilization centres, the National Disarmament and Demobilization Commission (NDDC) stated on Jan. 10 that the total number of fighters was 23,416, instead of the previously estimated figure of 60,000. The earlier estimate had been arrived at by the African peacekeeping force, ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group), and UN officials, on the basis of submissions by the rebel factions. The largest of these, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, had claimed to have 25,000 fighters; the Mandingo wing of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) had claimed 12,460; the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) 8,734; the Krahn ULIMO wing (ULIMO-J) 7,776; the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) 4,650; and the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) 750.

By Jan. 30, UN officials said that 15,519 fighters had been disarmed since the process had begun in November 1996 [see p. 41354]. Of these 3,397 were children and 1,028 women.

Resumption of Council of State

On Jan. 17 the ruling Council of State held its first full meeting since October 1996, following mediation by the Nigerian Foreign Affairs Minister, Tom Ikimi. Council meetings had been broken off after Taylor had accused George Boley, the LPC leader, of orchestrating an attempt to assassinate him [see p. 41354].

■ **Last articles pp. 41354; 41402; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

NIGERIA

1997 Budget

The Finance Minister Anthony Ani announced a doubling of spending on the rural sector in the 1997 budget, details of which were reported during the week commencing Jan. 20.

Infrastructure, agriculture, water resources and rural development accounted for 32.4 per cent of the N146 billion in expenditure (US$1.00=N22.00 as at Jan. 24), with the health and education sectors also receiving higher spending allocations. Defence spending, at N17.5 billion, represented 12.0 per cent of the total, compared with 10.9 per cent in 1996.

The overall rise in spending, from N142 billion in 1996, was to be financed by a US$1 rise to US$17 per barrel in the estimated price of oil. In his report, Ani said that a surplus from the higher-than-expected oil prices in 1996, had led to a rise in foreign exchange reserves from US$1.44 billion to US$4.09 billion. He projected 1997 oil production at 2.04 million barrels per day, yielding revenue of more than US$11 billion, an increase of 13.5 per cent over 1996.

Bomb explosions in Lagos

Two soldiers died and 29 others were wounded on Jan. 7 by a bomb which detonated as their army bus passed a bus stop in Lagos. Two civilians were also injured in the attack. Two bombs had exploded in the city during December, apparently aimed at Col. Muhammad Marwa, the military administrator of Lagos and close aide of Gen. Sani Abacha, the country's military ruler. No one claimed responsibility for the attacks.

■ **Last article p. 41354; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

GABON

Landslide victory for PDG

Official results released in January confirmed that the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) had won a landslide victory in the legislative elections, taking 82 seats in the 120-member National Assembly. The first round of the elections had taken place on Dec. 15, with second-round voting in most constituencies on Dec. 29 and the final nine seats decided on Jan. 12.

In first-round elections for the new Senate on Jan. 26, the PDG won 44 seats in the new 91-member upper house. The second round was scheduled for Feb. 9.

Results of the Gabonese National Assembly elections

Party	*Seats*
Gabonese Democratic Party	82
National Rally of Woodcutters	12
Gabonese Progress Party	8
Circle of Liberal Reformers	3
Gabonese Socialist Union	2
ADR*	1
African Forum for Reconstruction	1
Circle for Renewal and Progress	1
Congress for Democracy and Justice	1
Gabonese People's Union	1
National Rectification Movement-Originals	1
Rally for Democracy and Progress	1
Independents	6
Total	120

*Expansion unknown.

In mayoral elections held on Jan. 19 Fr Paul Mba Abessole, leader the main opposition National Rally of Woodcutters (RNB), was elected Mayor of Libreville.

Re-appointment of Obame-Nguema as Prime Minister

On Jan. 28 Paulin Obame-Nguema, having been re-appointed Prime Minister earlier in the day, named a largely unchanged Cabinet. [For full Cabinet list see February issue]

■ **Last article p. 41401; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

MADAGASCAR

Return of Ratsiraka

Former military dictator Didier Ratsiraka was proclaimed President on Jan. 31 having won the second round of the presidential election held on Dec. 29. Official results gave Ratsiraka 50.71 per cent of the vote compared with 49.29 per cent won by Albert Zafy. The turnout was 49.66 per cent. Ratsiraka had been head of state from 1975 until his defeat by Zafy in presidential elections in 1992-93 [see pp. 39182; 39229; 39308-09].

The prolonged wait for the publication of the results had caused considerable tension, with both camps claiming victory. On Jan. 4, Zafy, who had been impeached in September 1996 [see p. 41254], alleged that the poll had been subject to vote-rigging and demanded a recount. These allegations were rejected by Ratsiraka.

■ **Last article p. 41401; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

IN BRIEF

CONGO: In early January details became available of the 1997 fiscal year budget presented by the Prime Minister Charles David Ganao on Dec. 15; it provided for expenditure of 493.926 billion francs CFA (US$1.00= 519.880 francs CFA as at Dec. 31, 1996) 120.226 billion francs CFA up on the previous year, with large allocations going to health, primary education, agriculture and the 1997 presidential elections.

GHANA: Jerry Rawlings was sworn in as President on Jan. 7 for his second term; among the foreign guests attended the ceremony were Nigerian head of state Gen. Sani Abacha and Louis Farrakhan, the controversial black leader of the US-based Nation of Islam.

GUINEA: In early January details became availble of the 1997 draft budget adopted by the Cabinet on Dec. 3; it envisaged revenue of 517.98 billion Guinea francs and expenditure of 951.69 billion Guinea francs (US$1.00=1000.00 Guinea francs as at Dec. 31, 1996).

GUINEA-BISSAU: Radio Finance International reported on Jan. 1 that the Lusophone Guinea-Bissau would enter the franc zone in May, abandoning the local peso for the CFA franc.

MALAWI: Kamudoni Nyasulu, the Director of Public Prosecutions, said on Jan. 27 that former President Hastings Kamazu Banda was to be charged with embezzling £5,500,000 of government funds. The alleged fraud was connected with the establishment of the Kamazu Academy, a school based on Eton, an elite English private school.

TANZANIA: A senior central bank official announced on Jan. 21 that the National Bank of Commerce (NBC), the largest state-owned bank, was to be split in three as part of reforms of the financial sector. Officials said that the three banks (working the trade, regional rural and micro-finance sectors) would improve the standard of Tanzania's banking.

COMESA: On Jan. 19 the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) suspended its executive secretary Bingu wa Mutharika following allegations of financial irregularities. A report on the investigation into the charges was expected to be made to a COMESA summit scheduled for March.

AMERICAS

UNITED STATES

Inauguration of Clinton

William (Bill) Jefferson Clinton was inaugurated as President of the USA on Jan. 20. Clinton took the oath of office, administered by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, on the steps of the Capitol at five minutes past noon on Jan. 20. His Vice-President, Albert (Al) Gore, was sworn in a few minutes earlier.

Although generally well received, the tone of Clinton's 22-minute inaugural address reflected the limitations on presidential power which he had encountered during his first term. Whereas in his first inaugural speech in 1993 [see pp. 30260-61] he had emphasized the "power of government", this time he spoke of the need for "a government humble enough not to try to solve all our problems". Emphasizing empowerment rather than direct government intervention, The President called for "a government strong enough to give us the tools to solve our problems for ourselves", and one which "lives within its means and does more with less."

He backed the idea of a balanced budget, but stressed the need to achieve this without sacrificing traditional US values. Reflecting the need to work with a Congress dominated by the Republicans, he went on to urge reconciliation and a "new spirit of community". He called for an end to political bickering, and said that it would be wrong "to waste the precious gift of time on acrimony and division".

Technocratic and centrist in tone, the president's address stressed the importance of information technology and the internet as "a bridge to the 21th century", a metaphor which had been central to his re-election campaign. Another important theme of the speech was the need to defeat racial intolerance. The inauguration coincided with a national holiday to honour Martin Luther King, the black civil rights leader murdered in 1968 [see p. 22687]. Speaking of the "constant curse" of racism", Clinton noted that "these forces nearly destroyed our nation in the past. They plague us still."

The inaugural celebrations, which lasted for three

days and which ended Jan. 20, were estimated to have cost US$30 million.

Continued controversy over campaign finance

In the wake of the most expensive set of elections in history—an estimated US$1.6 billion was spent on the 1996 presidential and congressional campaigns—and months of controversy over elements of both Democratic and Republican campaign funding, the President on Jan. 21 announced tougher regulations on the sources of Democratic Party funding.

These included a ban on the acceptance by the party of contributions from foreign citizens and corporations, including US subsidiaries; a ceiling of US$100,000 on donations from any one individual in a given year; and close scrutiny of all donations greater than US$5,000. He also advocated the elimination of "soft" money contributions—i.e. those made to a political party (and, therefore, subject to fewer controls) but then passed on to individual candidates. (It was estimated that in the 1996 presidential and congressional elections the Republicans had raised US$141 million and the Democrats US$122 million from "soft" donations).

On Jan. 28 Clinton also admitted "making mistakes" by allowing the participation of White House and federal officials in fund-raising "coffee mornings" during the 1996 election campaign. At the same time he committed himself to the enactment of a bill to reform campaign finances. The President stated at the first press conference of his second term—which was dominated by the issue of campaign financing—that "we must all share responsibility for the excesses. I take mine." Particular concern had been caused by the revelation that 17 top US bankers had had an audience with the President at a White House meeting at which campaign officials were also present. In total, 103 coffee mornings had been held at the White House between January 1995 and August 1996.

Louis Freeh, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), informed Congress on Jan. 29 that he had assigned a 25-member team to investigate the economic and national security implications of the role of John Huang, the Asian fund-raiser who acted as an intermediary between Asian donors and the Democrats [see p. 41309].

Huang, a former employee of the Indonesian Lippo Group, was later employed by the Commerce Department and then by the Democratic Party as a fund-raiser. The FBI was concerned that he might have used his position to gain access to commercially sensitive information concerning China. Huang was also implicated in another allegedly questionable deal involving federal assistance for a scheme to purchase a video store in Bangkok, in return for a donation of US$200,000 to the Democrats in 1996. Also implicated in the purchase was Maria Haley, a director of the federal Export-Import Bank (EXIMBANK), an Arkansan and long-standing associate of the President.

Donations to the Republican Party also came under scrutiny when it emerged during the course of the month that the Republicans had charged corporate donors for special services, including the monitoring of proposed legislation and the employment of dedicated staff at party headquarters to promote the donor's interest.

Progress of Paula Jones sexual harassment case

Lawyers acting for former Arkansas state employee Paula Corbin Jones asked the Supreme Court on Jan. 13, in an hour-long hearing, to compel President Clinton to answer, while still in office, a US$700,000 civil lawsuit for defamation and violation of her civil rights. The case related to an alleged incident of sexual harassment against Jones which had occurred when Clinton was Governor of Arkansas in 1991 [see p. 40092].

The suit had been postponed until after the presidential election by a Supreme Court ruling in June 1996 [see pp. 41133-34]. This date having passed, attorneys acting for Jones urged the Court to allow the case to proceed forthwith, as had been ordered by a federal appeals court in January 1996 [see p. 40893.], rather than being postponed until Clinton had completed his term of office as demanded by the President's lawyers. Clinton's attorneys cited as a precedent the 1982 ruling in *Richard M. Nixon* v. *Fitzgerald* which had granted a sitting president immunity from civil suits arising from his actions while in office. They argued that forcing an incumbent president to fight a civil suit would disrupt the good governance of the country. However it remained far from certain that the *Fitzgerald* precedent was applicable since the events in the Jones case had occurred prior to the President attaining office and, even had Clinton been President at the time of the alleged incident, it would not have constituted a legitimate duty of his office.

Lawyers for Jones cited the ruling in *United States of America* v. *Richard M. Nixon* [see p. 26645] which had established that executive privilege was not absolute, and did not override the requirements of the criminal law. Extrapolating from this ruling, they made the case that executive privilege could not override the requirement of a president to face a civil action.

The Supreme Court was expected to rule on the matter before July 1997. Many observers felt that the most likely outcome was for a compromise which would defer the trial until after the President had left office, but would to allow the gathering of evidence prior to this. Commentators also considered that there remained a possibility that the case would be concluded by an out-of-court settlement.

Convening of 105th Congress

The 105th congress, elected in November 1996, convened on Jan. 7. Two of the first acts of the new Congress were to elect a Speaker of the House of Representatives and to embark upon Senate confirmation hearings for Cabinet nominations [for Clinton Cabinet nominations see p. 41402].

During the course of the month, Senate confirmation hearings proceeded without any significant developments. On Jan. 22 Madeleine Albright, prospective Secretary of State, and William S. Cohen, the President's choice for Secretary of Defence, were both unanimously confirmed by 99 votes to nil in the full Senate. The uncontroversial hearings drew a favourable comparison with the beginning of the President's first term, when Senate hearings had forced the withdrawal of Zoe Baird, Clinton's nominee for Attorney General [see p. 39261].

However, the Senate decided on Jan. 31 to postpone a decision on the candidatures of Alexis Herman (prospective Labour Secretary) and Anthony Lake (nominated as CIA Director) until the outcome of enquiries into ethics allegations had been completed. It was alleged that Herman had improperly involved officials in political affairs while serving as Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison, and that Lake had been involved in the illegal shipment of arms to Bosnian Muslims during the civil war in former Yugoslavia. In addition there was a Justice Department investigation into Lake's failure to divest himself of energy shareholdings in order to avoid a potential conflict of interest upon his appointment as National Security Adviser in 1993.

Re-election of Newt Gingrich as Speaker of the House

Newt Gingrich narrowly secured re-election as Speaker of the House of Representatives on Jan. 7, the first day of the new Congress. In so doing he became the first Republican in 68 years to serve a second consecutive term as Speaker. He achieved the feat despite his admission that he had improperly used tax-exempt charitable donations to fund a politically partisan college course, and had attempted to mislead Congress over the affair [see p. 41403].

Gingrich won 216 votes compared with 205 cast for the Democratic candidate Richard Gephardt, the House Minority Leader. Four Republicans voted against Gingrich including Jim Leach the Republican chair of the House banking and financial services committee, who himself attracted two votes. Leach cast his vote in favour of Robert Michel the former Republican Minority Leader. Six members, including five Republicans,

effectively abstained by voting "present", and four members were absent or did not vote. It was the first occasion in recent history that a Speaker had been elected by a majority of those present rather than by a majority of all 435 members.

Following his re-election, Gingrich told a packed House that he was sorry for his ethical lapses, and that "to the degree I was too brash, too self-confident or too pushy, I apologize." Notwithstanding his re-election, the consensus was that Gingrich's power had been considerably reduced from its pinnacle in 1995. Observers felt that a significant amount of authority had shifted to Senator Trent Lott, the Republican leader in the upper house who was known to have a better working relationship with the President.

Overshadowing Gingrich's re-election campaign was the uncertainty concerning the punishment which the House ethics sub-committee would impose upon him.

The sub-committee was scheduled to start its deliberations on Jan. 8, one day after the House voted for the new Speaker. A number of Republicans voiced their public unease over having to vote before the punishment was known. One Republican, Martin Forbes of Long Island, had by Jan. 2 stated that he would not vote for Gingrich, and there was a danger that enough Republicans could abstain to cause Gingrich's defeat. By Jan. 8 the number of Republicans who had stated on record that they would not vote for his re-election had grown to five, including Jim Leach. Amidst this climate of uncertainty, the suggestion that an interim speaker should be elected until the ethics committee had concluded its inquiry began to be taken seriously. In response the Republican leadership embarked on an intense lobbying campaign in favour of Gingrich's candidacy. Despite some opposition within the party's ranks, the campaign was aided by the lack of a serious alternative Republican candidate. Reassurance from Republican members of the ethics sub-committee that the Speaker would probably be reprimanded also helped secure his re-election since it became clear that Gingrich's admission of guilt and apology in December had been a form of plea-bargaining designed to secure a lesser punishment and that Republicans could be reasonably confident that they would not be voting for a candidate who would be forced to resign.

On Jan. 10, three days after the House vote, the *New York Times* published the transcript of a conference call made in Florida on Dec. 21 between Gingrich, his lawyer, and Republican leaders Tom DeLay and Dick Armey. The transcript suggested, but did not prove, that Gingrich had broken his promise of the same day, that he would not try to mount a concerted political defence against the sub-committee's findings. However, the leak of the illegally made recording backfired on the Democrats when the FBI announced that it was launching an investigation into the circumstances of the tape. The investigation led to the withdrawal from the Gingrich enquiry on Jan. 15 of Jim McDermott, the senior Democrat on the ethics sub-committee, who had been passed the tapes by two Democratic activists who had made the recording. It was alleged that the leak of the tapes to the *New York Times* had come from McDermott.

Gingrich's re-election meant that all leadership positions within the new Congress remained unchanged.

Main office holders in 105th Congress

Al Gore President of the Senate
Trent Lott Senate Majority Leader
Don Nickles Senate Majority Whip
Tom Daschle Senate Minority Leader
Wendell Ford Senate Minority Whip
Newt Gingrich Speaker of the House
Dick Armey House Majority Leader
Tom DeLay House Majority Whip
Richard Gephardt House Minority Leader
David Bonior House Minority Whip
Jesse Helms Chair Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Strom Thurmond Chair Senate Armed Services Committee
Pete V. Domenici Chair Senate Budget Committee
William V. Roth Jr. Chair Senate Finance Committee
Orrin G. Hatch Chair Senate Judiciary Committee
Benjamin A. Gilman Chair House International Relations Committee
John Kasich Chair House Budget Committee
Bill Archer Chair House Ways and Means Committee
Henry J. Hyde Chair House Judiciary Committee
Floyd Spence Chair House National Security Committee

[All committee chairs were Republicans.]

Reprimanding of Newt Gingrich

The House of Representatives on Jan. 21 accepted the House ethics sub-committee's report into the illegal use of tax-exempt charitable donations to fund a college course taught by Gingrich. Following the two-year investigation the sub-committee recommended an official reprimand and a fine of US$300,000. The full House voted in accordance with this recommendation by 395 in favour and 28 against, with five abstentions.

The sanctions were the most severe ever imposed on a Speaker but fell short of a censure which, under House rules, would have forced Gingrich's resignation. The vote came after publication of a report on Jan. 17 by James Cole, Special Counsel to the ethics committee, which found that Gingrich had breached the normal boundaries of congressional conduct and been guilty of seven separate offences. The punishment was negotiated between Gingrich and the full House ethics committee on Jan. 17 in a closed session.

The punishment administered by the House was not the end of the affair for the Speaker. At the end of the month he still faced the possibility of investigation and criminal prosecution by the Internal Revenue Service or the Justice Department. In addition, the issue of whether Gingrich would pay the fine personally or from campaign funds offered the prospect of further controversy.

Commencement of Supreme Court euthanasia appeal

The Supreme Court on Jan. 8 began hearing appeals from the states of Washington and New York which were seeking to overturn lower federal court rulings that state laws which prohibited doctor-assisted suicide contravened the provisions of the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution. The court was expected to deliver its ruling on the issue in mid-1997. A total of 49 US states had enacted laws which specifically prohibited doctor-assisted suicide; the only state to have legislated to permit the practice was Oregon [see pp. 40270; 40673].

Further allegations of sexual harassment in the military

It was reported on Jan. 14 that two of the four women cadets who had enrolled at the Citadel military academy in Charleston, South Carolina, in August 1996 had withdrawn from the college after alleging that they had been the victims of "criminal, sadistic and disgusting" harassment.

Their withdrawal followed the suspension in December of a cadet and three student officers allegedly involved in the harassment of female cadets [see p. 41404], The two cadets, Kim Messer and Jeanie Mentavlos, complained that they had been subject to sexual harassment and other humiliating assaults. The attacks, which had occurred mainly in December, resulted in a total of 11 cadets being charged with disciplinary offences.

In an unrelated case, it was reported on Jan. 23 that court martial proceedings had begun at the 195-year-old elite West Point military academy for officer training, following an allegation of rape brought by a 20-year-old female cadet. The attack was alleged to have occurred in May 1996, and the case was believed to have been the first of its kind in the academy's history.

Bombing of abortion clinics

The 24th anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade*, the landmark Supreme Court decision which had

legalized abortion in the USA, was marked by an explosion near a Washington DC abortion clinic on Jan. 22. The small device, which injured one person, followed the bombing of clinics in Tulsa and Atlanta.

The Atlanta bombing on Jan. 16 involved two devices which injured six people. The attack in Tulsa on Jan. 19 caused property damage but no casualties. Responsibility for both attacks was claimed by anti-abortion activists, although no group acknowledged responsibility for the Washington bomb. The attacks were the latest in a 15-year campaign against abortion facilities in the USA during the course of which five people had been murdered, and clinics had been bombed, blockaded and set on fire in 28 states [see pp. 40093; 40315].

Other criminal and security incidents

The FBI warned of the danger of packages bearing Egyptian post marks on Jan. 3, after the discovery of nine bombs hidden inside musical Christmas cards. The identical bombs, posted in Alexandria on Dec. 21, had been posted to several targets including the Washington bureau of the *al-Hayat* Arabic newspaper [see pp. 41467.]

A spate of shootings, at least two of which appeared to be random, claimed the lives of 10 children and young people in the Miami area of Florida between Jan. 20 and the end of the month. The killings defied what appeared to be a national trend, reported on Jan. 7, whereby the murder rate in the USA dropped by 7 per cent in the first half of 1996. It was the third successive annual reduction and was attributed variously to harsh penal policies, the introduction of "zero tolerance" policing, and to the ageing of the country's population.

Announcement of proposed federal assistance for WashingtonDC

On Jan. 14 the President announced a proposed $4 billion five-year rescue package for the US capital. The plan entailed measures known to be favoured by the Republican leadership in Congress.

Under the terms of the proposal, the federal government would cease to pay its annual $660 million grant to the District of Columbia. However, it would accept varying degrees of liability for city responsibilities including the pension scheme for DC employees, the city prison and criminal justice systems, and the provision of health care for the poor. The measures were expected to add an extra US$339 million to the federal budget deficit between 1998 and 2003. The imposition of direct federal control in this manner would mark the end of the limited autonomy which the District had enjoyed since 1974, and represent a setback for its ambition to achieve full US statehood.

In Brief

An **air crash** involving a Brazilian built, twin-engined propeller-driven Embraer-120 commuter aircraft resulted in the deaths of 29 passengers and crew on Jan. 9. The aircraft, owned by Comair, crashed into a field and exploded while attempting to land in poor weather conditions at Detroit airport.

Paul Efthemios Tsongas, 55, a former Senator for Massachusetts and a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1992, died in Boston on Jan. 18 from complications caused by cancer treatment.

The trial of **John du Pont** the richest man ever to face a charge of first degree murder in the USA, began on Jan. 27 in Media, Pennsylvania. The heir to a fortune made from the chemical industry was accused of the murder of a former Olympic champion wrestler, David Schultz, on his estate on Jan. 26, 1996. The defence was expected to declare that du Pont was clinically insane at the time of the murder.

■ **Last article pp. 41402-04; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement**

CANADA

Out-of-court settlement in Mulroney libel case

The federal government and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on Jan. 6 issued a formal apology to former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and agreed to pay pretrial expenses—estimated at an $1,000,000 (US$1.00=Can$1.38 as at Jan. 3)—incurred in his Can$50,000,000 libel suit against them which was due to have commenced that day [see p. 40816].

Mulroney began the legal action after it was revealed by official sources in November 1995 that he was under criminal investigation for the alleged receipt of Can$5,000,000 in bribes following the purchase of 34 Airbus A-320 airliners worth Can$1.8 billion by Air Canada in 1988. In its apology the RCMP described the allegations against the former Prime Minister as "unjustified".

Allegations of Canadian army brutality in Bosnia

Concern about the quality of Canada's military leadership was expressed following the release on Jan. 17 of details of an investigation into the alleged sexual harassment and drunken abuse of patients at a mental hospital at Bakovici, Bosnia, in 1993 by Canadian military personnel.

It was revealed that 47 soldiers of the 12th Armoured Regiment of the Canadian army faced disciplinary action in connection with the affair. The news coincided with reports that Lt.-Col. Roch Lacroix, a senior commander with the UN forces in Haiti, had been ordered home after allegations that he inappropriately drew his weapon after finding his way blocked by a vehicle.

The revelations were the latest in a series of sexual harassment and brutality allegations to hit the Canadian military. These included harassment claims in regard to the army's first female infantry officer Sandra Perron, which had been reported Jan. 3, and allegations of torture by Canadian peacekeeping troops in Somalia in 1993, which had been the subject of an official inquiry [see pp. 40349; 41311].

■ **Last article pp. 41360; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

PERU

Continued deadlock in hostage crisis

President Alberto Keinya Fujimori and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of Japan held a crisis meeting on Jan. 31 in Toronto, Canada, in a bid to find a peaceful solution to the 45-day crisis in Lima where left-wing guerrillas continued to hold a group of hostages in the Japanese embassy [see pp. 41404-05]. Although further hostage releases had taken place during January, the month ended with no indication that that a settlement to the crisis was imminent.

The Japanese government had reportedly requested the meeting with Fujimori in order to express concern for the 72 remaining hostages after recent police and military manoeuvres around the diplomatic compound had resulted in shots being fired by the 20 Tupac Amarú Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas besieged within the embassy. The 72 hostages, all who remained from an original party of more than 500 captured in December, comprised more than 20 Japanese citizens, including prominent businessmen and the country's ambassador to Peru. The other remaining diplomat was the ambassador from Bolivia, where four MRTA members were serving prison sentences. The remainder of the hostages were Peruvians with close connections to the government and security forces. These included Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela, five legislators from the ruling Change 90-New Majority (C90 - NM), Maxino Rincón, head of the counter-terrorism police, and Pedro Fujimori, the youngest brother of the Peruvian President.

Further hostage releases had occurred in January after negotiations involving the Red Cross and the Catholic Church. These had included a former chief of the police and counter-terrorism on Jan. 17 and a sick deputy police chief on Jan. 26. Seven hostages had been freed on New Year's Day.

Under strong Japanese pressure Fujimori had resisted the possibility of a commando raid to free the hostages. However, the fact that security around the compound was tightened in mid-January was widely seen as a sign that hard-liners in the government and the military who favoured a military solution to the siege were gaining ground. The government on Jan. 16 also rejected a MRTA demand for participation by the Guatemalan government—which had signed a peace accord with left-wing guerrillas in December [see pp. 41406-07]—in talks designed to end the siege. The authorities also announced that all visits to MRTA prisoners in Peruvian prisons had been cancelled.

This hardening of the government's position had occurred after reports on the previous day that the MRTA leader, Néstor Cerpa Cartolini, had accepted a government proposal to join a "commission of guarantors". The commission, which was also to include representatives from the government, the Vatican and the International Red Cross, was conceived as a forum for negotiating the release of the hostages and the safe passage to a third country for the guerrillas. The future of the commission remained uncertain, however, as the MRTA leader was believed to have agreed to participate only on condition that the release of 400 imprisoned MRTA members was on the agenda for discussion, a demand which was central to the guerrillas but which had been consistently rejected by the government.

■ Last article pp. 41404-05; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

BRAZIL

Presidential re-election bill

The prospect of a second term for President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was raised on Jan. 28 when a special session of the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Congress, supported a constitutional amendment bill which would allow him to stand for re-election. [For 1994 elections of Cardoso see p. 40225.]

To become law, the bill, which also permitted the re-election of state governors and mayors, had to survive one further vote in the Chamber and two in the Senate. Subsequent opposition spoiling amendments to the bill were defeated in the Chamber on Jan. 29, including one which demanded that Cardoso resign six months before the 1998 presidential election if he were to stand as a candidate.

The constitutional amendment had passed a first critical test on Jan. 15 when it was approved by 19 votes to 11 by a special re-election committee of the Congress. Significantly, six committee members belonging to the centrist Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB, the largest party of the ruling coalition) endorsed the measure in defiance of a decision of taken a party conference on Jan. 12. A motion against the re-election proposal by the PMDB's anti-government wing had been passed by the conference by 343 votes to 229, although the motion was not binding on the party's congressional deputies. The conference also instructed them to abstain from voting on the re-election amendment until Feb. 15, or after the completion of elections in the Congress for the presidencies of the Senate and Chamber.

On Jan. 13 Cardoso had called on the PMDB to act more like an ally and less like an opposition. It appeared that the party was attempting to use the threat of opposition to the re-election bill in a bid to secure government support for its candidates for the two powerful congressional presidencies. If Cardoso were to have favoured the PMDB candidates, however, he risked alienating the Liberal Front Party (PFL)—the second largest grouping in the ruling coalition—particularly its candidate for the Senate presidency, Antônio Carlos Magalhães, who was one of Cardoso's closest allies.

In order to neutralize PMDB pressure, some government ministers had reportedly advised Cardoso to take advantage of his high standing in opinion polls by requesting approval for his re-election bid in a national referendum. This option was also favoured by opposition parties who wanted to disrupt and delay any re-election bid by the president.

Prospect of increased rural tension

A warning that Brazil faced the highest rural conflict in its history was made jointly on Jan. 20 by the leaders of the militant Landless Workers Movement (MST) and the Rural Democratic Union (UDR), a re-launched hardline landowners association [see p. 41266].

Interviewed in the same edition of the daily *Jornal do Brasil*, MST leader José Rainha Junior and UDR president Roosevelt Roque dos Santos likened themselves to opposing "generals" in a mounting rural war. Rainha insisted that land occupations would escalate and said that the MST was broadening its activities by participating in the struggle against government privatizations and the re-election of Cardoso who, he claimed, had held office in an unprecedentedly "favourable climate to implement agrarian reforms". Roque dos Santos admitted that the UDR had used armed force against landless peasants, but claimed that the government had supported the MST by expropriating land which the organization had occupied. He predicted that landowners would have to rely on the army as the federal police would be "overpowered" by the MST.

As reported by Rede Globo Television on Jan. 13, the MST's new aggressive strategy included the invasion of productive land near cities in order to win the support of urban workers, and the occupation of state properties about to be privatized, especially those of the huge Rio Doce Company conglomerate. The same station on Jan. 16 reported the killing of three landless peasants by armed guards at the Santa Clara farm in Ourilandia do Norte, in the northern Amazonian state of Pará. Police were reportedly searching for other bodies.

Police on Jan. 10 began a two-week operation to remove some 8,000 to 12,000 gold prospectors and loggers who were seriously threatening the environment of the Sarare Indian reservation in Matto Grosso state, near the border with Bolivia, and the culture of its tiny Kathitaullu tribe.

Severe storms

Storms in the states of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro left at least 65 people dead and nearly 20,000 homeless according to local media reports on Jan. 4-5.

It was reported on Jan. 23 that heavy rain had flooded 11 towns in the southern São Paulo state, leaving some 5,500 people homeless and at least 30 missing. Some 3,000 were also left homeless in the neighbouring state of Paraná.

■ Last article p. 41405; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

ARGENTINA

Government commitment to maintain parity of peso

The government in late January confirmed that the parity of the peso with the US dollar would remain a mainstay of economic policy. The currency had been pegged to the US dollar since 1991 [see p. 38095-96].

According to the *Financial Times* on Jan. 31. the Economy Minister Roque Fernández gave assurances that there would not be a devaluation for at least 10 years, and that investors could subscribe without risk to a US$500 million, 10-year peso-denominated bond which Argentina was about to launch on the European markets.

Visit to Falkland Islands by Argentinian relatives - Relations with UK

Relatives of Argentinian soldiers killed in the 1982 war in the Falkland Islands made a controversial visit to a war cemetery on the islands on Jan. 20.

The 15 relatives arrived at the UK military base at Mount Pleasant on a chartered flight from Rio Gallegos in southern Argentina. During their trip they reportedly had little contact with civilian residents on the islands. A second group of Argentinians was to make a similar visit in February. The only previous such contact had involved a visit by 375 relatives in March 1991 under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross [see p. 38096].

An agreement to resume full negotiations on a long-term fisheries accord covering disputed waters off the Falklands was reportedly reached during informal discussions on Jan. 11-12 in the UK between Foreign Minister Guido di Tella and his UK counterpart Malcolm Rifkind.

The issue of the Falklands' sovereignty was not discussed, but on Jan. 3 President Carlos Saúl Menem—in a communiqué marking the 164th anniversary of the UK's "illegal and illegitimate occupation" of the islands—had reasserted Argentina's claim over the archipelago while also emphasizing its willingness to achieve a "peaceful, just and lasting" solution to the territorial dispute. Menem later played down reports that he intended to ask the US government to mediate on Argentina's claim, stating instead that he would merely ask for US assistance on the sovereignty issue during the visit to Argentina by US President Bill Clinton in March.

Murder of journalist

The badly burned body of José Luis Cabezas, a leading investigative news photographer, was discovered on Jan. 25 in the beach resort of Pinamar, south-east of Buenos Aires.

Cabezas, who had also been shot in the head in a Mafia-style execution, was on an assignment in the resort—frequented by government officials and leading business people on holiday—for the weekly *Noticias* magazine, a publication known for its critical reports on Menem and other prominent figures.

■ Last article p. 41406; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

CHILE

New intelligence system

The government on Jan. 6 announced the creation a national intelligence system. It was one of a number of measures designed to increase security and combat terrorism.

The initiative was in response to widespread criticism of the intelligence services following a dramatic breakout on Dec. 30 by four members of the left-wing Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR) from a maximum-security prison. The guerrillas were scooped from an exercise yard in a bucket hanging from a helicopter in the midst of a gun battle between their rescuers and guards. The escape provoked calls for the resignations of the Justice and Interior ministers.

■ Last article p. 41266; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

URUGUAY

Implementation of constitutional reform

A constitutional amendment which reformed the electoral system came into effect on Jan. 13. The new law, which simplified the procedure for both presidential and local elections, had been approved by the legislature in October [see p. 41317]. It was then endorsed in a plebiscite on Dec. 8 with 1,015,828 votes cast in its favour and 930,288 against.

■ Last article p. 41317; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

COLOMBIA

Announcement of state of economic emergency

President Ernesto Samper Pizano bypassed Congress on Jan. 13 and decreed a state of economic emergency aimed at stemming inflows of foreign currency and reducing the US$4 billion budget deficit.

The emergency measures, to be introduced within 20 days, included (i) a US$900 million reduction in public spending; (ii) the limiting of public sector pay rises to 13 per cent; (iii) the imposition of sales taxes in previously exempt areas; (iv) a crackdown on tax evasion and smuggling; and (v) a 6 per cent tax on foreign credits to control upward pressure on the peso.

Public sector unions and government critics expressed fears that the measures would imperil up to 19,000 public sector jobs and numerous social spending programmes. Samper warned in advance that the government would not be deflected from its course by strikes and protests, and said that without the emergency measures economic growth would be severely limited and unemployment would rise above its current level of 11.9 per cent. Opposition parties said that tax increases would only worsen the recession and claimed that the government's loose fiscal policy in the past had been due to high public spending which had been sanctioned by Samper in order to bolster his weak political position.

The collapse of international coffee and banana markets had exacerbated problems caused by an overvalued peso; since May 1996 the peso had risen from 1,060 to around 980 to the US dollar. This had encouraged domestic financial institutions to buy dollars, which had left the Central Bank with a massive foreign currency reserve and had fuelled inflation, which was already running at 28 per cent per annum. The peso was also strengthened, to the detriment of exporters, by large inflows of foreign investment into the booming oil industry, and also by the actions of the Central Bank itself which had kept monetary policy tight and interest rates high in order to offset the government's loose fiscal stance.

Controversial sentences for drug barons

Lenient prison sentences, imposed on two alleged leading drug barons on Jan. 17, were widely condemned at home and abroad, particularly by the US government. Prosecutor-General Alfonso Valdivieso announced that he would appeal against the sentences which he described as "insignificant".

The brothers, Gilberto and Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela, were sentenced by a Cali judge to 10½ and nine years' imprisonment, respectively. They were alleged to have been responsible during their 20-year reign at the head of the Cali drugs' cartel for producing and smuggling thousands of tonnes of cocaine and heroin, murdering dozens of people, and engaging in high-level political corruption, including an alleged donation of US$6,000,000 to Samper's 1994 presidential election campaign [see pp. 41089; 41138]. Both were expected to be freed from prison within four years as a result of remission for good behaviour, prison work and the period served since their arrests in 1995 [see pp. 40452; 40594; 40675]. Equally controversial was the judge's decision to fine them a total of US$12 million when their accumulated wealth was thought to total several billion US dollars.

Controversy over new Defence Minister

President Samper insisted on Jan. 20 that Guillermo González Mosquera would be

sworn in as the new Defence Minister on Feb. 3 in place of Juan Carlos Esquerra Portocarrero, who was to be the new ambassador to the USA.

US ambassador Myles Frechette warned that there would be a negative reaction from his government as a result of the "big blunder" of appointing a minister "with ties to drug trafficking". González Mosquera, the former ambassador to Venezuela, rejected the allegation but confirmed that he had met Justo Pastor Perafan, currently sought by the authorities for alleged drug trafficking and illegal enrichment, and had arranged a place in a Swiss school for one of Pastor's sons whilst serving as a government official in Geneva.

■ **Last article p. 41405-06; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

MEXICO

Rejection of additional election funding by opposition parties

The country's two main opposition parties were reported on Jan. 23 to have refused to accept extra public funding for election campaigns in 1997. The funds had been available following electoral reform legislation which was amended in November, against the wishes of President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, by anti-reformist members of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) [see pp. 41360-61].

As reported in the *Financial Times* on Jan. 23, the centre-right National Action Party (PAN) and the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) turned down a total of US$43,000,000 of public funding. The money had been offered after the Congress—dominated by the PRI—had amended Zedillo's electoral reform bill to approve a 10-fold increase in funding for political parties [see pp. 41360-61]. Zedillo had waived his right to veto the PRI amendments to his bill and had argued that "adequate financing" of political parties was essential to prevent democracy being "corrupted by organized crime". However, the opposition claimed that the disproportionate rise in funding was unjustified in a period of economic austerity. It also criticized the move as designed to preserve the PRI's political domination, and as an attempt to undermine genuine electoral reform efforts which sought to limit official spending and allow opposition parties equal access to the media [see p. 41040; 41088; 41183]. Therefore, in an unprecedented act, the PAN refused to accept 208 million new pesos [US$1.00=7.82 new pesos as at Jan. 24] (39 per cent of its total allocation) and the PRD rejected 128 million new pesos (33 per cent). PAN leader Felipe Calderón Hinojosa stated that his party relied on networks of volunteers and would manage without the extra funds which he suggested could be a "dangerous source of corruption".

Under the amended law, the PRI, the largest party in the Congress, received 873 million new pesos in funding, compared with the PAN's 520 million new pesos and the PRD's 388 million new pesos. The remainder of the total of 2.14 billion pesos was to go to smaller parties.

Despite their joint stance on funding, Calderón refused to countenance an alliance with the PRD to fight mid-term congressional elections in July, stating that Mexican democracy would benefit from "clearly demarcated parties". PRD leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador favoured such an alliance and had stated on Jan. 4 that a vital step in establishing democracy would be the securing of an opposition majority in the Chamber of Deputies (lower house).

Debt repayment to USA

Three years ahead of schedule, the government on Jan. 15 repaid to the US government the final instalment of an emergency loan which had helped Mexico avoid defaulting on its foreign debt following the December 1994 peso devaluation crisis [see p. 40316],

The final US$3.5 billion repayment to the US Treasury was welcomed by the US government which had pledged up to US$20 billion in 1995 as part of the US$50 billion international rescue package [see pp. 40352-53; 40401; 41136].

The Central Bank also announced that an additional US$1.5 billion repayment had reduced Mexico's outstanding debt to the IMF to US$11.5 billion. At the height of the peso crisis, the IMF had lent some US$18 billion. Over the previous two years, Mexico had raised in excess of US$16 billion on voluntary capital markets, some of which had been used to cancel the more expensive short-term US Treasury and IMF emergency credits.

Release of alleged Zapatista rebels

Seven alleged members of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) were released from a Mexico City prison on Jan. 3 after a judge overturned previous convictions for terrorism, rebellion, conspiracy, manufacturing explosives and possessing weapons reserved for the military. All of those released denied being members of the EZLN and claimed that their arrest in February 1995 had been on "trumped up" charges.

Although the EZLN continued its anti-government campaign, there was considerable speculation surrounding the nature of an offer by the organization on Jan. 11-12 to hold a meeting with the government.

The EZLN had withdrawn from peace talks in November [see p. 41361] and in a New Year statement, marking the third anniversary of its uprising in the southern state of Chiapas, the organization's high command remained defiant and promised "no surrender". However, in a second and more conciliatory message, it promised to consider "observations" by Zedillo which were reportedly contained in a letter to the EZLN's leading spokesman Subcommandante Marcos in December. These were said to refer to an agreement covering indigenous culture and rights reached by both sides in February 1996 but never implemented [see p. 40946].

In a communiqué on Jan. 5, the rebel Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), based in the southern state of Guerrero, accused the army of having taken part in recent criminal activities aimed at discrediting their movement.

The EPR claimed that the army had trained special groups to impersonate guerrillas and that these were responsible for a number of violations against remote communities, including the rape of peasant women. The communiqué also asserted that the US armed forces were advising the army in counterinsurgency operations.

■ **Last article p. 41404; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

GUATEMALA

Provision of international aid to assist peace accord

A four-year international aid plan was signed in Brussels on Jan. 22 to support the implementation of December's peace accord which ended the 36-year civil war [see pp. 41406-07].

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was to contribute some US$800 million; the World Bank US$400 million; and the EU US$250 million in grants. The government was also expected to contribute some US$700 million by increasing total tax revenues by 50 per cent above 1995 levels.

Chinese veto of UN observers

In the UN Security Council on Jan. 10 China vetoed a US proposal to send 155 UN military observers to monitor the implementation of the peace accords. The Chinese decision appeared to be motivated by Guatemala's diplomatic links with Taiwan.

Government changes

A Cabinet reshuffle was announced on Jan. 15; posts affected were as follows:

+**Héctor Cifuentes Mendoza** Labour
***Mariano Ventura** Agriculture
***Roberto Moreno Godoy** Education
***Carlos García** Secretary-General of the Presidency.

*new appointment
+altered responsibilities

■ **Last article pp. 41406-07; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

HONDURAS

Government changes

A Cabinet reshuffle was announced on Jan. 8. Posts affected were as follows:

***Luis Carlos Zelaya** Communications, Public Works and Transport

+**Jeronimo Sandoval** Natural Resources and Environment

***Ricardo Arias** Agriculture and Livestock

*new appointment
+altered responsibilities

■ **Last article p. 41362; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

NICARAGUA

Inauguration of new government

President Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo of the right-wing Liberal Alliance (AL) took office on Jan. 10, together with a new Cabinet. Vice-President Enrique Bolanos later defined the priorities of the new administration as (i) to promote honest government and fight corruption; (ii) to increase public confidence in the judiciary; (iii) to find legal solutions to the problems posed by the confiscation of property under the left-wing Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) government (1979-1990); and (iv) to disarm the criminal bands operating in the north.

The distribution of portfolios as at Jan. 10 was as follows:

***Lorenzo Guerrero** Presidency
***David Robleto** Foreign Co-operation
***Emilio Alvárez-Montalvan** Foreign Affairs
***José Antonio Alvarado** Interior
***Estebán Duque-Estrada** Finance
***Cario de Franco** Agriculture and Livestock
***Wilfredo Navarro** Labour
***Edgard Quintana** Construction and Transport
***Carlos Quiñones** Health
Humberto Belli Pereira Education
***Jamilet Bonilla** Social Action
***Pedro Joaquín Chamorro** Tourism
***Roberto Stadthagen** Environment and Natural Resources
***Jaime Cuadra** Defence
***Julio Centeno** Attorney-General
***Noel Ramírez** President of the Central Bank

*New appointment.

Prior to Alemán's inauguration, the Supreme Court on Jan. 8 had declared null and void 80 laws passed by the outgoing National Assembly since Nov. 22. These included salary increases for state employees and a statute which gave the Assembly the power to elect the Attorney-General and the president of the Central Bank. The ruling was denounced by FSLN secretary-general Daniel Ortega Saavedra, whom Alemán had defeated in the October 1996 presidential elections [see pp. 41311-12; 41361], and who called on the people to take to the streets in defence of "constitutional order".

On Jan. 9 Ortega also led a boycott of the new National Assembly by FSLN deputies in support of a demand that all the posts in the legislature should be elected by secret ballot, a procedure adopted by the previous Assembly but rejected by the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE). The boycott resulted in right-wing parties winning control of all key positions in the Assembly. However, fears of a full-blown political crisis faded when Ortega entered into a first round of dialogue with the government on Jan. 16.

■ **Last article p. 41361; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

CUBA

Rejection of US financial assistance package

President Fidel Castro on Jan. 29 dismissed a US suggestion that Cuba would receive significant financial aid in return for its adoption of a multiparty democratic political system. Addressing a rally in Havana, Castro said that it was "unworthy" to imagine that liberty and dignity could be purchased, and that there was neither strength nor money in the world "capable of turning us into slaves again".

The US offer had been embodied in a report entitled "Support for a Democratic Transition in Cuba" which had been drafted by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Released on Jan. 28, it had stated that it was "reasonable to project" that during a six-year period following the establishment of a transition government, Cuba would receive from US$4 billion to US$8 billion from international financial institutions, multilateral agencies and individual countries.

The US government had been required to produce the report by the 1996 Helms-Burton Act which had sought to tighten the US embargo on Cuba by penalizing foreign investors [see pp. 40992; 41136; 41184; 41263; 41406]. The Act defined a transitional government as one which did not contain either Castro or his brother, Raúl Castro, the Vice-President and Defence Minister.

As forecast, US President Bill Clinton on Jan. 3 suspended for a further six months the controversial Title III provision of the Helms-Burton Act which allowed US citizens to sue foreigners judged to have benefited from the use of former US property seized after the 1959 Cuban revolution [see pp. 41184; 41406]. However, other provisions of the Act remained in force, including banning the entry into the USA of executives of companies using alleged confiscated assets.

The EU on Jan. 6 announced that it would pursue its case against the Helms-Burton legislation at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the grounds that it amounted to an extra-territorial application of US trade policy.

Visit by Canadian Foreign Minister

Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy visited Cuba on Jan. 21-23, the highest-ranking Canadian official to visit the island since 1976.

Axworthy held talks with Castro and other Cuban officials before signing a 14-point agreement under which both countries agreed to broaden their co-operation on human rights and judicial procedures through joint seminars and exchange visits. The agreement ran counter to US efforts to isolate Cuba internationally, and distanced Canada—Cuba's largest trade and investment partner—from an EU decision in December to make economic co-operation dependent on the progress of political reform. Axworthy stated that he had requested the release of specific political prisoners but on this, and on the issue of retaliatory action against Helms-Burton which was also discussed, no details were released. Cuba had announced punitive internal measures against the Helms-Burton Act in December [see p. 41406], and on Jan. 1 legislation had come into force which allowed Canadian companies punished under the Act to sue for damages in Canadian courts [see p. 41263].

■ **Last article p. 41406; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

CARIBBEAN

Relations between UK and Caribbean dependencies

The UK's Caribbean dependencies reacted negatively in early January to a British initiative to invoke "reserve powers" to extend the authority of UK-appointed governors.

The aim of the initiative was to counter increased money laundering—particularly in Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands—by bringing the territories' financial laws into line with money-laundering legislation adopted in the UK in 1994. Similar laws were already in operation in the Cayman Islands and were expected to be approved soon in Bermuda.

In response to a letter from British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, the Chief Minister of Anguilla, Hubert Hughes, on Jan. 3 accused the UK government of "blackmail", declaring that it was effectively forcing those dependencies into independence by threatening to remove the powers of local officials and to reduce their people to "second- and third-class" citizens. Rifkind's letter had stated that the UK government was prepared to use reserve powers to enable governors to pass, veto or amend legislation if the local legislature refused to do so and if such legislation was necessary in the interests of "public order, public faith or good government".

■ **Last article p. 41406; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

IN BRIEF

PARAGUAY: The government confirmed on Jan. 6 that a total of 236 officers loyal to former C-in-C Gen. Lino Oviedo had been retired since April 1996 when Oviendo had staged an abortive rebellion. President Juan Carlos Wasmosy stated on Jan. 2 that judicial procedures against Oviedo were not exhausted despite the decision of an appeals court to acquit him [see pp. 41043; 41090; 41224].

ASIA-PACIFIC

SOUTH KOREA

Continued strike action in response to new labour law

The industrial unrest and street protests which had started in late December in response to the enactment of a new labour law [see p. 41408] continued for most of January.

The government insisted that the new law—which was due to come into effect on March 1—would increase industrial competitiveness by ending job security guarantees. While President Kim Young Sam appeared to have some public support for the move, his decision to force the legislation through the National Assembly (the legislature) at a secret dawn session, in the absence of opposition members, was widely condemned. Meanwhile, union opposition to the legislation was increased by the government's delay in easing restrictions on trade union activity, promised when South Korea joined the Organization for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) in December [see p. 41408].

Continued strike action

While the strike action was suspended over the New Year holiday period, the outlawed Korea Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) had threatened to resume action on Jan. 6 and the official Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) said that it would fol low suit on Jan. 13 unless the new law was repealed.

In the run-up to the KCTU's Jan. 6 deadline, the government made efforts to avert a fresh round of strike action through a mixture of conciliatory statements and threats. In the former category were efforts to address worker concerns over the labour law, including a promise made by President Kim that the government would continue to "do its level best to assist in ensuring employment security and improving workers' standard of living". Less conciliatory, however, were reports on Jan. 5 that government prosecutors had summoned union leaders—including Kwon Young Il, head of the KCTU—for questioning, and had threatened to issue arrest warrants if they failed to appear.

Notwithstanding the government's efforts, the strikes resumed on Jan. 6, with the KCTU claiming that 190,000 workers, mainly in the car and shipbuilding industries, had withdrawn their labour. On Jan. 7 the strikes were reported to have spread to hospitals and broadcasting stations.

President Kim vigorously defended the labour law at a news conference on Jan. 7, and rejected a call by the opposition to renegotiate the legislation. However, Kim conceded that there were "some misunderstandings" about the law on the part of the workers. Some aspects of the law, he said, were disadvantageous to either labour or management, but "both parties should accept them for the sake of the larger national interest". The new law, he said, was modelled on those of other advanced industrial countries. [For more details of news conference see below].

Issuing of arrest warrants for union leaders

On Jan. 9 riot police surrounded the Myongdong Catholic cathedral in Seoul, where Kwon and other strike leaders had been camping while directing the industrial action. Police also raided the KCTU headquarters and trade union bases in a number of factories. In the most violent clashes since the unrest had begun in December, police fought running battles with students in the area around the cathedral. On Jan. 10 a worker was badly injured after setting himself alight in protest at the labour laws during a clash between strikers and riot police in Ulsan.

A court in Seoul issued arrest warrants for 20 trade union leaders, including Kwon, on Jan. 11. On the same day Lee Hong Koo, chair of the ruling New Korea Party (NKP), proposed holding a televised debate on the labour law to correct "misunderstanding of the laws' content". At first Kwon rejected Lee's offer as a "propaganda ploy", but he later accepted the challenge. However, government officials then said that they could not guarantee Kwon's freedom from arrest if he left the cathedral to participate in the debate. After a series of further clashes between police and strikers, on Jan. 15 the authorities sealed off the cathedral, where at least seven union leaders had taken sanctuary.

Signs of a possible compromise emerged on Jan. 19 when the KCTU announced that it would temporarily limit its campaign of industrial action to Wednesdays. However, Kwon warned that full industrial action would resume on Feb. 18 if the government continued to refuse to countenance a significant modification of the labour law. This represented something of a concession by Kwon who had previously insisted on a complete repeal of the bill. In response to Kwon's conciliatory gestures, government prosecutors said they would postpone attempts to arrest the union leaders in the Myongdong cathedral.

Meeting between President Kim and opposition leaders - Agreement to revise labour law

On Jan. 21 President Kim held a meeting with the leaders of the country's main political parties to discuss the labour law. Attending the meeting were: Kim Dae Jung, leader of the main opposition party, the centre-left National Congress for New Politics; Kim Jong Pil, leader of the opposition United Liberal Democrats; and Lee Hong Koo, chair of the NKP. All three party leaders were expected to be candidates in the December 1997 presidential election.

During the meeting President Kim agreed to revise the labour law. He called for parliamentary

negotiations to rewrite the law, but refused opposition demands for its annulment, claiming that such a move would be unconstitutional. Kim also accepted opposition demands to suspend the arrest warrants issued against the union leaders. In another important concession, President Kim also agreed to revise a law, passed at the controversial Dec. 26 National Assembly session, which had given new investigative powers to the intelligence services.

Kim Dae Jung described the meeting as having "made important progress", and praised the President for "his determination to find a solution" to the dispute. Kim Jong Pil, however, characterized the meeting as a "failure" on the grounds that "nothing was resolved or agreed properly".

The President's compromise represented a sharp retreat from his previous firm stance on the labour law. Nevertheless, union leaders said they would continue limited strike action until an agreement on the revision of the law was reached.

OECD rebuke over labour laws

South Korea was rebuked by the OECD on Jan. 23 . In an unprecedented censure, OECD Secretary-General Donald Johnston stated that the South Korean government's labour reform, as it stood, did "not fully meet the commitments made by the Korean government concerning freedom of association and collective bargaining".

A team of four international trade union representatives, including one from the OECD, had left the country on Jan. 16 after being warned by the government that a meeting with strike leaders could result in their deportation.

Establishment of presidential commission on restructuring of financial industry

At his news conference on Jan. 7, President Kim also announced the establishment of a new presidential commission to examine the restructuring of the domestic financial industry ahead of scheduled liberalization.

The 31-member panel, consisting of businessmen, economists and financial-industry representatives, was inaugurated in late January. It was headed by Park Seong Yawng, the former chair of the Kumho industrial group, and was due to report before the end of 1997.

Bankruptcy of Hanbo

On Jan. 23 bankruptcy proceedings were started against Hanbo, the steel and construction chaebol. It was the biggest corporate collapse in South Korea in more than a decade and caused further embarrassment to President Kim's administration, which had suffered a sharp fall in popularity owing to the anti-labour-law strikes. In an acknowledgment of the domestic problems which he faced, Kim announced on Jan. 28 that he was cancelling a trip to Europe scheduled for early March.

Founded in 1974 as a construction company, Hanbo eventually expanded into other unrelated businesses, acquiring a steel company in 1989, a pharmaceutical company in 1993 and a mutual savings and finance company in 1994. In 1993 Hanbo began building a massive steel plant which, when completed, was to be the fifth largest steel plant in the world. Although costs for the plant's construction escalated from 2,700 billion won to 5,700 billion won (US$1.00=843.50 South Korean won as at Jan. 3), Hanbo appeared to have little difficulty in securing extra financing for the project. Opposition parties claimed that President Kim's administration had exerted pressure on the country's banks—particularly upon Hanbo's main creditor, Korea First Bank which, with shareholders' equity of 1,800 billion won, had loaned almost 1,100 billion won to Hanbo—to provide loans in return for political donations by Hanbo to the NKP. Some opposition politicians were also reported to have suggested that one of Kim's sons might have been involved in arranging loans for Hanbo.

On Jan. 26 President Kim denied that he had accepted any political donations since coming to office in 1993. On the following day the government agreed to conduct a special parliamentary investigation into the collapse of Hanbo. The opposition immediately questioned the impartiality of the official inquiry, claiming that key justice officials were close political allies of President Kim. Nevertheless, the government rejected opposition demands for a bipartisan parliamentary investigation and the appointment of a special independent prosecutor.

Police raided the home of Chung Tai Soo, Hanbo's founder, on Jan. 28, and barred the heads of Hanbo's main creditor banks from leaving the country. Chung had twice been convicted on corruption charges involving the administration of former President Roh Tae Woo, although the last of two suspended prison sentences which he had received was quashed in 1996 by an appeals court on a technicality. Chung was arrested on Jan. 31 and charged with embezzlement and fraud.

On Jan. 29 the Office of Bank Supervision (OBS), the banking watchdog, launched an investigation into the five South Korean banks which had issued loans to Hanbo. The banks under investigation were: Korea First, Cho Hung, Korea Exchange, Bank of Seoul and the state-run Korea Development Bank. Lee Suk Chae, a senior presidential adviser for economic affairs, warned on Jan. 30 that the government would not bail out Hanbo's main creditor banks. Lee said that the central bank "cannot and will not provide special loans to Hanbo's creditor banks". However, the Finance Ministry had announced on Jan. 28 that it would inject up to US$7 billion of emergency funds into the banking system over the next week to avoid corporate bankruptcies in the wake of Hanbo's collapse.

■ Last article p. 41408; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

JAPAN

Key policy speech by Prime Minister

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto delivered a key policy speech at the opening of the Diet (the Japanese legislature), on Jan. 20. Promising an overhaul of the economic and social system, he called on the people of Japan to be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. The *Guardian* of Jan. 21 noted that Hashimoto was heckled by the opposition and won scant applause from members of his own Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

In his speech Hashimoto pledged to reduce the budget deficit as a priority, and thereby rejected the largely unsuccessful efforts by his predecessors to promote economic recovery through increased expenditure. He restated plans to increase the consumption tax from 3 to 5 per cent [see pp. 41408-09] to avoid what he warned could be a collapse of government finances. "To lessen or postpone the progress of reform out of a fear of pain will not be allowed", he said, and he called on each individual "to keep an unbending spirit and stand firm in the face of difficult times and possible failure."

Creation of new unified intelligence body

On Jan. 20 the government unveiled a new unified intelligence agency, the Defence Intelligence Headquarters (DIH). Analysts claimed that the formation of the new entity was aimed at ending decades of fragmented intelligence gathering and reliance on information from the USA.

The DIH brought under one umbrella group the five hitherto separate intelligence agencies of the army, navy, air force, the Defence Agency and the Japan Military Joint Staff Council.

Developments in corruption and fraud scandals

January saw further developments in the Izui corruption scandal which had erupted in November, shortly after the formation of the new Hashimoto government [see pp. 41370-71].

The scandal had come to light on Nov. 7 when prosecutors arrested Junichi Izui, the owner of Izui Sekiyu Shokai, an Osaka oil wholesale company. He was detained on suspicion of having evaded tax payments on brokering fees involving Mitsubishi Oil Co., Mitsui Mining Co., and other companies. The case soon acquired political connotations when it emerged that Izui was a big donor of political funds.

On Jan. 8 police arrested Takeshi Otsuki, a former senior official of Mitsubishi, and Masanori Kozuma, former deputy director of Mitsui Mining. Both were detained on suspicion of having conspired with Izui to help him receive 2.39 billion yen (US$1.00=115.92 yen as at Jan. 10) from Mitsui Mining by issuing an unauthorized memorandum of guarantee. Izui, who had been detained since November, was also formally re-arrested on Jan. 8 on the same charge. On Jan. 9 prosecutors raided the headquarters of Mitsubishi Oil in Tokyo in connection with the affair.

In an unrelated corruption case, it was announced on Jan. 14 that the trial of Yasuo Hamanaka, the former head of the non-ferrous metals department of the Sumitomo Corporation, who was alleged to have incurred massive losses in unauthorized copper transactions, would open on Feb. 17 at the Tokyo District Court [see p. 41371].

Collapse of finance house

On Jan. 16 All Corp, an independent consumer credit company, announced plans to liquidate by the end of March. All Corp's president, Ubumi Sagara, said that the move was necessary because the company could no longer deal with its large amounts of non-performing loans, mostly to real estate projects. Total liabilities were estimated at around 341 billion yen.

The largest post-war collapse of a non-bank financial institution had occurred in October 1996, when Nichiei Finance Co., a Yokohama-based housing finance company, filed for bankruptcy with debts and liabilities of over 991 billion yen [see p. 41319]. All Corp and Nichiei were described by the *Financial Times* of Jan. 17 as "part of a new round of non-bank collapses". In an earlier round, a number of jusen (housing loan companies) had collapsed [see pp. 41101-02; 41147-48].

First payment to comfort women

On Jan. 11 the Asia Peace National Fund for Women made the first compensation payments to "comfort women" who had been forced to serve as unpaid prostitutes for the Imperial armed forces during the Pacific War. Seven South Korean women each received a lump-sum compensation of 5,000,000 yen. The women also received a letter of apology from Hashimoto.

The Asia Peace National Fund for Women had been established in July 1995 [see pp. 40645; 41102; 41227-28]. Technically a private fund, it received government contributions and its creation was part of a wider plan of atonement announced in 1994. In June 1995 the fund agreed to make payments to some 300 surviving "comfort women" in South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines. The South Korean government had 162 women officially registered as former "comfort women". A South Korean women's group, the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, was strongly opposed to any compensation by the nominally private fund and demanded direct payment from the Japanese government.

Tour of ASEAN countries by Prime Minister

Hashimoto embarked on an eight-day tour of five of the seven member countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Jan. 7. It was Hashimoto's first major Asian tour since taking office in January 1996 [see p. 40900], and was intended to reinforce Japan's ties in an area in which trade and investment were increasingly important. The ASEAN countries accounted for 16 per cent of Japanese trade in 1996 and supplied 10 per cent of its oil and at least 80 per cent of its natural gas. During his tour Hashimoto visited Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam.

While in Singapore, Hashimoto delivered a speech on Jan. 14 in which he outlined a "Hashimoto doctrine" for the Asia-Pacific region. The main component of the doctrine was a call for regular summit meetings between Japanese and ASEAN leaders to discuss security, trade, investment and aid. During his speech, Hashimoto also called on the ASEAN nations to help China become a "constructive partner" by encouraging its economic reform and by increasing dialogue with senior Chinese officials.

■ Last article p. 41408-09; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

CHINA

Concerns over health of Deng Xiaoping

The Chinese authorities denied persistent rumours during January that the country's "paramount leader", Deng Xiaoping, 92, was close to death. A Foreign Ministry spokesman on Jan. 7 stated that there was "no big change" in Deng's health.

According to The *Independent* of Jan. 2, two Hong Kong newspapers had reported that Deng—who was last seen in public in February 1994 and was believed to be suffering from Parkinson's disease—was seriously ill and had been placed in intensive care. The *South China Morning Post* claimed that Deng had suffered a "spell of unconsciousness" about once every week since early 1996, while *Sing Tao* reported Deng had been admitted to a military hospital in Beijing.

The rumours were compounded by a 10-hour television series celebrating Deng's life and achievements which was screened in China on Jan. 1-12. Analysts interpreted the biographical series as a form of premature obituary, as well as an attempt to signpost 1997 as an historic year for China as it would include the resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong and the convening of the 15th congress of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Broadcast by state television and, according to official figures, watched by about 220 million people (28 per cent of the 800 million Chinese with access to a television set), the 12-part series was also seen by commentators as reaffirming the position of President Jiang Zemin as Deng's chosen heir. In addition to prominently featuring Jiang, the series toured Deng's family home in Sichuan province, traced his early years as a student in France in the 1920s and amplified his achievements as the architect of China's post-Mao Zedong economic reform programme. Several important but potentially embarrassing events were omitted: these included any mention of Deng's second wife, his participation in the anti-Rightist movement of 1957, the disastrous Great Leap Forward, and the suppression of the pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 [see pp. 36720-22].

Visit to France by Qian Qichen

Foreign Minister Qian Qichen visited France on Jan. 10-12 for talks with French President Jacques Chirac, Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette and senior business executives. The visit was the first leg of an 11-day European and African tour which ended with Qian's return to China on Jan. 21.

It was agreed that the French President would pay a state visit to China in May 1997. Following the meeting with Chirac at the Élysée Palace on Jan. 11, Qian said that he was "very happy with Franco-Sino relations" and believed that Chirac's visit would be "a tremendous success". The visit was seen as signalling the end of the tension which had arisen between the two countries in 1992 when France had sold Mirage jets and missiles to Taiwan [see pp. 39190; 39217].

US report on human rights abuses

In what appeared to be a pre-emptive step, the Chinese government rebuked the US administration for meddling in its internal affairs on Jan. 28, two days before a US State Department publication criticized China's alleged human rights abuses.

The annual report on human rights, which covered 193 countries and was released on Jan. 30, concluded that all critics of the CCP in China had been silenced, and that the "government in 1996 continued to commit widespread and well documented human rights abuses, in violation of internationally accepted norms". It was also announced in the report that the new US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, would visit China in February.

Establishment of new anti-corruption office

A new office with a brief to investigate major corruption was set up on Jan. 14. The Special Case Investigation Section (SCIS) was part of the Law and Discipline Department of the Procuratorate and, according to a Procuratorate official, was established to target severe cases of neglect of duty by state employees, "violations of citizens' rights, abuse of power and other major crimes".

Launch of Murdoch-owned Internet service

An Internet service was launched on Jan. 15 by News Corporation, the group owned by media tycoon Rupert Murdoch. The new venture, known as ChinaByte, was established in partnership with the CCP newspaper, the *People's Daily*. The move followed a US$5.4 million information technology joint-venture deal between the newspaper and Murdoch's group in 1995.

Around US$2.5 million was invested in the service, which followed the lifting of controls barring China's users on the Internet's World Wide Web from access to foreign news sources. News Corporation was expected to recoup its investment from advertising, but analysts believed that the move was also an attempt by the media group to increase the reach of its Star satellite TV service via China's rapidly-expanding cable network. According to The *Financial Times* of Jan. 16, Murdoch had sought a foothold in China since the early 1980s, but had been frustrated by Chinese suspicions concerning his intentions.

Snowstorms in western province

The Xinjiang region was hit with the fiercest snowstorms for 30 years in January. Officials reported the storms killed at least 34 people, cut off a further 100,000 in their homes and killed almost 1,000,000 sheep.

■ Last article p. 41410; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

TAIWAN

Resignation of Soong as Taiwan Governor

Provincial governor James Soong offered his resignation on Dec. 31, 1996, in protest over the ruling Kuomintang's (KMT) decision effectively to dismantle the provincial government as part of a sweeping constitutional reform package. President Lee Teng-hui had not formally accepted Soong's resignation as of late January. Soong, 56, was one of the few remaining senior KMT officials born in mainland China. He was appointed as Governor in March 1993 [see p. 39365].

The existence of a separate Taiwan provincial government stemmed from the flight of the defeated KMT regime from the Chinese mainland in 1949. With the KMT insisting that Taipei was the capital of all China, the island of Taiwan was seen merely as one of the country's provinces. The island's province's government covered all of Taiwan except for its two largest cities: Taipei and Kaohsiung.

The plan to reform Taiwan's government had been agreed at a bipartisan National Development Conference held in December, which had been attended by representatives from the KMT and the leading opposition—and pro-independence—Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The decision to dismantle the provincial government with its 100,000-strong workforce was taken largely for reasons of cost and efficiency. The provincial government had long duplicated the functions of the central and county governments and it was estimated that its elimination would save the state treasury an estimated NT$80 billion per year (US$1.00=NT$27.50 as at Dec. 31, 1996). The provincial government had also been in debt for many years—current estimates of its level of debt stood at 700 billion NT dollars—and had relied on central government to subsidize its annual spending programme of some 200 billion NT dollars.

However, Soong's subsequent resignation placed the reform proposals in jeopardy and threatened KMT unity. Analysts claimed that a realignment of Soong's supporters in the KMT might prevent Lee from steering the reforms through the Legislative Yuan and the National Assembly. Conversely, Lee was not able to offer Soong any concessions to persuade him to return to office because to do so would have threatened to undermine his power to effect further reforms. Lee had already agreed with the DPP at the National Development Conference to further proposals to strengthen the powers of the president and the Legislative Yuan, at the expense of the National Assembly and the Control Yuan, and the continued support of the DPP was essential if these reforms were to become law.

The reforms were denounced by the opposition Chinese New Party as a plot to promote Taiwanese independence and, thereby, an acceptance that the loss of the mainland was irreversible.

Accord on restoration of sea links with China

Unofficial representatives from Taiwan and China reached an agreement on Jan. 22 to restore limited direct sea links across the Taiwan Strait. The agreement was reached at a meeting of private-sector shipping-industry executives in Hong Kong. Pressure to find a solution to the 48-year ban on cross-strait trade had been mounting with the imminent handover of Hong Kong to China in July 1997.

The initial agreement was to permit foreign-registered ships to ply the routes between the port of Kaohsiung in south Taiwan and the ports of Xiamen and Fuzhou in southern China from March 1997 onwards. Further details remained unclear, although Taiwan insisted that the routes would be used for transhipment only. Industry analysts said the first beneficiaries of the accord would be the shipping lines operating between the west coast of the US and China which were previously routed through Hong Kong at great expense. Port operators in Hong Kong reportedly played down the impending loss of shipments to Taiwan and claimed that increased economic activity in southern China would more than compensate for the loss.

First joint-venture bank with China

The *Financial Times* of Jan. 20 reported that the (Taiwanese) Central Bank of China had approved the establishment of the first joint-venture bank between Chinese and Taiwanese business interests in Shanghai.

The First Sino Bank—a joint venture between the Shanghai Pudong Development Bank and an undisclosed group of Taiwanese businessmen—was due to open in Pudong, the financial development zone in eastern Shanghai.

■ Last article p. 41368; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

HONG KONG

Appointment of Executive Council

Shipping tycoon Tung Chee-hwa, who was elected Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in December [see pp. 41409-10], unveiled the

membership of his Executive Council on Jan. 24. The Council was predominantly composed of business and political figures with strong links with mainland China.

Only two, businessman Raymond Chi'en and housing authority head Rosanna Wong, had served in the current Executive Council headed by Governor Chris Patten. Five were selected from the 150-strong Preparatory Committee, the Sino-Hong Kong body created to oversee the transfer of sovereignty, and several were drawn from the 400-member Selection Committee, the electoral college established by China to elect the Chief Executive. Three of the councillors were members of the provisional legislature, the body voted in by the Selection Committee in December [see pp. 41409-10] to replace the 60-member Hong Kong Legislative Council (Legco). Around half of the new Council was composed of businesspeople, including lawyer and former Stock Exchange chair Charles Lee, Henry Tang, chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries and banker Anthony Leung. Tam Yiu-chung was the only trade unionist selected.

First meeting of provisional legislature - Election of Speaker

The provisional assembly for the HKSAR met for the first time on Jan. 25 in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen. The controversial Beijing-backed assembly elected Rita Fan as its Speaker. She defeated Andrew Wong, the current President of the Legco.

A senior Chinese official who attended the meeting, stated that the assembly would pass laws before the handover of sovereignty to China, but that these would not take effect before July. The decision was condemned by Democratic Party leader Martin Lee, who threatened to take legal action if the chamber engaged in formal law-making prior to the handover and described the assembly as "an illegal legislature in exile on the mainland".

Release of imprisoned journalist

Hong Kong journalist Xi Yang, who had served three years of a 12-year prison term [see p. 39960], was released by the Chinese authorities on Jan. 25. The decision to parole Xi, who was sentenced in 1994 for "stealing state secrets", was viewed by some commentators as a political move designed to pacify criticism over reports on Jan. 20 that the Preparatory Committee had proposed repealing Hong Kong's 1991 bill of rights [see p. 38291] and other legislation covering the formation of political parties and peaceful demonstrations.

The proposal was criticized by Patten who, in an interview published in The *Financial Times* on Jan. 22, condemned it as a "strike at the heart of Hong Kong's civil liberties" which threatened to "wreak enormous and irrevocable damage" on the territory.

Controversy surrounding retirement of immigration chief

Hong Kong's former director of immigration, Lawrence Leung, claimed on Jan. 10 that the government had forced him to retire from his post in July 1996 [see p. 41191]. Leung made his claim while giving evidence to a Legco select committee, formed to investigate allegations that he had passed confidential immigration material to Beijing. It contradicted the official version of his departure which had cited "personal reasons".

Leung claimed that he had been summoned to a meeting on July 5, 1996, and told that the government had lost confidence in him and given him until 5 p.m. to decide whether to retire or face charges. His retirement was announced the following day. Called before the committee on Jan. 15, Civil Service Secretary Lam Woon-kwong, who had hitherto maintained that Leung had chosen to retire on personal grounds, admitted that the former immigration director had been forced from his post. Lam told the inquiry that Leung had been given the ultimatum because he was guilty of not disclosing certain business interests. Lam alleged that Leung had formed an advertising agency in China while "dealing with a lot of immigration matters" and had not revealed holdings in a company with assets of around US$40 million.

Controversial US extradition ruling

The Hong Kong government condemned a US judge's ruling on Jan. 7 that he would block a request for the extradition of former British-American Tobacco executive Jerry Lui who faced bribery and corruption charges in the territory. The judge justified his decision on the grounds that Lui could not be prosecuted before the Chinese takeover, and that the colony's legal system would not remain "sufficiently fair" after the transfer of sovereignty.

Closure of detention camp

Whitehead, one of Hong Kong's two detention camps for Vietnamese migrants, was closed on Jan. 3. Around 500 inmates were sent to temporary quarters and another 1,000 shipped to the High Island detention centre.

Approval of new Hong-Kong-China road link - Opening of new UK consulate

The Chinese government gave initial approval on Jan. 16 for the construction of a 27km bridge from the mainland to Hong Kong. The bridge was part of a plan to link the southern Chinese city of Zhuhai and the HKSAR with a six-lane highway. The project was expected to be realized by 2004 at a cost estimated at around US$1.4 billion.

A new $US50 million UK consulate-general building was opened in Hong Kong on Jan. 30. Known as the "British fort" by local residents, UK Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Jeremy Hanley said that the building was "a fitting symbol of the UK's continuing commitment to Hong Kong". It was expected to become the largest passport-issuing office outside the UK and would employ a staff of 150 consulate employees and another 192 workers engaged by the British Council.

■ **Last article pp. 41409-10; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

PAKISTAN

Formation of national security council

The military was given a formal role in the political power structure on Jan. 6 after the caretaker government of Malik Meraj Khalid approved the establishment of a Council for Defence and National Security (CDNS). This was the first significant step to formalize the role of the military since the death of Gen. Zia ul-Haq in 1988.

The CDNS was to be chaired by the president and would also comprise the prime minister, the ministers of defence, foreign affairs, and interior, the minister/adviser to the prime minister for finance; the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee; and the chiefs of staff of the army, navy and air force. The government insisted that its role would be advisory and that its decisions would not be binding on the Cabinet. It was to advise the government on a range of security issues including determining national security priorities; formulating and co-ordinating defence policy; and making recommendations on the imposition of emergency rule. The decision was endorsed on Jan. 7 by President Farooq Ahmed Leghari who chaired the first meeting of the CDNS on the following day.

The creation of the CDNS was condemned by many opposition politicians, including Benazir Bhutto who had been dismissed as Prime Minister by Leghari in November [see pp. 41365-66]. On Jan. 8 Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani, Speaker of the dissolved National Assembly, accused the caretaker government of exceeding the limits of its authority. He said that the decision breached the 1973 constitution and drew parallels with an unsuccessful attempt by Gen. Zia in 1985 to create a similar body. He also expressed the widely held view that the formation of the CDNS threatened to be a precursor for the declaration of emergency rule and the postponement of legislative elections scheduled for Feb. 3. This view was rejected by the government, which maintained that the elections would go ahead as planned. On Jan. 8 Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Ershad

Ahmed Haqqani, claimed that the Council would help safeguard the democratic system and expressed the hope that its existence would eliminate the possibility of the use of Article 58-2B of the Constitution which empowered the president to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the government.

Supreme Court ruling on Bhutto dismissal

The Supreme Court on Jan. 29 upheld Bhutto's dismissal as Prime Minister [see pp. 41365-66]. In a damning indictment, the judges voted six to one to support Leghari's action, accepting his case that her administration had been characterized by nepotism, corruption and misrule and that her government had been responsible for hundreds of extra-judicial killings in Karachi [see p. 41410].

The judgment cleared the way for the general election on Feb. 3. Preparations for the poll had been slow as political parties awaited the Court's ruling, had Bhutto won her appeal against her dismissal the elections would have been cancelled.

Bhutto said that she was not surprised by the Court's ruling. She vowed to fight on, but said that she expected to lose the elections because of vote-rigging. She said that although analysis by her Pakistan People's Party indicated that the party should take 90 of the 217-seat parliament, she did not expect the official results to reflect these findings.

Arrest of Bhutto's father-in-law

Bhutto's father-in-law, Hakim Ali Zardari, was arrested on charges of fraud and tax evasion on Jan. 2. Najam Sethi, an adviser to the caretaker government, said that the arrest marked the start of a crackdown on corruption, and declared that the government expected to arrest 30 to 40 more people within the next week. Bhutto's supporters regarded the arrest as part of a concerted anti-Bhutto campaign. Her husband (and Zardari's son), Asif Ali Zardari, had been charged in December with the murder of Benazir's brother and political rival Murtaza Bhutto [see pp. 41278; 41411].

Fatal gas leak

At least 20 people were killed on Jan. 8 as a result of a gas leak in the Moghulpura area of Lahore. The gas was thought to be ammonia, and more than 900 people were reported to have suffered ill-effects. Punjab Governor Khwaja Ahmed Tariq Rahim ordered a judicial inquiry into the incident.

■ Last article pp. 41410-11; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

INDIA

Election of Kesri as Congress (I) parliamentary leader

Extending his grip over Congress (I), the party president Sitaram Kesri was on Jan. 3 named leader of the party's parliamentary delegation. He replaced P.V. Narasimha Rao who, facing corruption charges, had been forced to step down in December 1996 having already relinquished the party presidency in September [see pp. 41268-69; 41411].

Kesri was unanimously elected by the parliamentary caucus after expected opposition from former Environment Minister Rajesh Pilot and former Defence Minister Sharad Pawar failed to materialize. Pawar proposed Kesri for the post and was rewarded with the position of party leader in the Lok Sabha.

Commentators expected that Kesri would exploit divisions within the United Front coalition government of Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda and seek to replace it with a Congress (I)-led administration. This intention became apparent when the party announced on Jan. 27 that it no longer supported the economic liberalization process which it had introduced six years earlier. Congress (I) spokesman, Vithal Gadgil, said that many in the party believed that it had been defeated in the 1996 elections because it had "acquired an elitist, anti-poor image". There was a virtual consensus across the political spectrum that the reforms had been implemented too quickly and that the burden had fallen disproportionately on the poor. The party also demanded controls on multinational companies and, therefore, expressed its opposition to Deve Gowda's plans to allow foreign airlines into the domestic aviation sector and to permit foreign media interests entry into the country.

Killing of trade union leader

Datta Samant, one of the country's most prominent trade union leaders, was killed on Jan. 16 when four unidentified men ambushed his car near his Bombay home. Police sources believed that the killing had been professionally executed but that the motive was unknown. Samant, a former MP, had been a key figure in Maharastra state in the 1980s, organizing many long and bitter strikes. His most famous campaign was an 18-month strike of 250,000 Bombay textile workers in 1981-82.

The killing led to a spontaneous strike and sporadic violence in the industrial belt of central and north Bombay coinciding with Samant's funeral on Jan. 17. Thousands of mourners paid their respects, and police called in reinforcements to prevent the outbreak of violence.

Kashmir violence

Four people were killed by a bomb planted in an auto-rickshaw by separatist guerrillas within metres of the Srinagar home of Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah on Jan. 3. At least three police officers were also injured in the blast on Gupkar Road at the centre of the city's high-security zone in which the local headquarters of the Intelligence Bureau and homes of four other state-government ministers were situated. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by Jammat-ul-mojahedin, a group demanding Kashmir's unification with Pakistan.

Abdullah had been sworn in in October 1996 after his National Conference had swept to victory in the state's first elections since Kashmir had come under direct presidential rule in 1990 [see pp. 37610; 41269; 41324]. The government had been concerned at the level of recent violence: in the previous eight weeks more than 15 people were killed in Srinagar by bombs placed on bicycles and cars, while 13 people were killed and 29 injured in clashes in a single incident in northern Kashmir on Jan. 1.

PWG attack in Andra Pradesh

The Maoist People's War Group (PWG) attacked a remote police station at Karakagudem in Andra Pradesh on Jan. 10, killing 16 police officers and two civilian prisoners. In October the state government had reimposed a ban on the PWG which had been lifted some months earlier. In November the organization had attacked a police station in Adilabad killing 84 people [see p. 41367].

■ Last article p. 41411; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

BANGLADESH

Government changes

On Jan. 14 Prime Minister Shaikh Hasina Wajed announced changes to the government appointed in June 1996 [see p. 41142], bringing in a number of new members.

Posts affected were as follows:

+**Shaikh Hasina Wajed** (*f*) Prime Minister; Armed Forces Division; Cabinet Division; Special Affairs; Defence; Establishment

*__Syeda Sajeda Chowdury__ Environment and Forest

+**Abdul Matin Khasru** Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs

+**Matia Chowdry** (*f*) Agriculture; Food

+**Obaidul Kader** Minister of State for Youth and Sports and Cultural Affairs

***Dr. Amanullah** Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare

***Falukder M. A. Khaleque** Minister of State for Disaster Management and Relief

***Mohuiddin Khan Alamgir** Minister of State for Planning, Civil Aviation and Tourism

*New appointment.

+Altered responsibilities.

Women are denoted by (*f*).

Release of Ershad

On Jan. 9 the Supreme Court granted bail to former President Gen. (retd) Mohammad Ershad on the last of a series of charges against him involving corruption and misuse of power. Ershad, who had had been jailed following his overthrow in 1990 [see pp. 37906-07; 38288-89; 40648], had continued to lead the Jatiya Dal (JD) while imprisoned.

News of his release angered many of his opponents who claimed that it was the result of a deal between the JD and the ruling Awami League. JD support had been a crucial factor in the formation of the Hasina government in June [see p. 41142].

Ruling on coup trial

A High Court ruling in January removed the final legal obstacle to the prosecution of those involved in the 1975 coup in which President Shaikh Mujibur Rahman, father of Prime Minister Hasina was assassinated.

On Jan. 28 the High Court ruled that the Awami League government had acted lawfully in repealing a long-standing indemnity ordinance which had protected the accused. The authorities had charged 25 people accused of direct involvement in the killing of 32 people, including Mujibur, his wife and three sons. Of these, only 10, including Col. Farukur Rahman, who had masterminded the coup, had been arrested; the remainder had fled abroad. The trial was expected to begin in February.

■ **Last article p. 41411; for 1996 key events see 1997 Reference supplement**

SRI LANKA

LTTE attack on Paranthan

In the most serious military engagement since the attack on Mullaittivu in July 1996 [see pp. 41193-94], the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the army garrison at Paranthan in the northern Kilinochchi district on Jan. 9. Paranthan was on the main north-south road linking Colombo and Jaffna.

A Defence Ministry statement issued on Jan. 13 claimed that some 3,000 LTTE guerrillas had taken part in the pre-dawn raid and that government troops had been forced to destroy some heavy artillery and ammunition dumps to prevent them falling into rebel hands. The statement claimed that over 350 LTTE rebels, including 20 senior leaders, had been killed and over 500 wounded during the seven-hour battle and that 232 government troops had been killed. The rebel radio station, Voice of Tigers Radio, admitted on Jan. 11 that 171 LTTE cadres died in the battle, but claimed that the LTTE had captured significant quantities of arms and ammunition, including mortars, heavy machine guns and artillery shells.

■ **Last article p. 41411; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

NEPAL

Government changes

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba reshuffled his Cabinet on Jan. 8 in an apparent attempt to create greater unity within the fragile coalition comprising his National Congress Party (NCP), the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP).

Deuba appointed a number of new ministers and, most controversially, reinstated five ministers who had resigned in December to support a motion of no-confidence against him. RPP members Kamal Thapa, Ramkrishna Acharya, Prem Bahadur Bhandari and Rajiv Parajuli had supported an anti-government motion sponsored by the United Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN) on Dec. 24. Anis Ansari of the NSP had abstained in the vote which Deuba's centre-right coalition had only narrowly survived.

Posts affected were as follows:

+**Phatteh Singh Tharu** Agriculture

+**Bhim Bahadur Tamang** Law and Justice

#**Kamal Thapa** Local Development

#**Ramkrishna Acharya** Commerce

***Motiprasad Pahadi** Forest and Soil Conservation

#**Prem Bahadur Bhandari** State Minister for Agriculture

#**Rajiv Parajuli** State Minister for Local Development

***Chin Kaji Shrestha** State Minister for Finance

***Gopalji Jung Shah** Minister of State for Industry

***Hasta Bahadur Malla** Minister of State for Education

***Deepak Prasad Bastola** Minister of State for Home Affairs

***Chabiprasad Devkota** Minister of State for Population and Environment

***Palten Gurung** Minister of State for Tourism and Civil Aviation

#**Anish Ansari** Minister of State for Labour

***Bishnu Bikrama Thapa** Minister of State for Commerce

***Bhakta Bahadur Rokaya** Minister of State for Forest and Soil Conservation

*New appointment.

+Altered responsibilities.

#Reinstated.

On Jan. 9 the Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party (NWPP) expelled Minister of State Rokaya for breaching a party injunction on members joining the government.

Hope that the reshuffle would stabilize the coalition appeared short-lived after reports that NCP president Girija Prasad Koirala opposed Deuba's decision to reinstate the dissident ministers. According to local press reports Koirala publicly criticized Deuba. Some NCP legislators were reported to be threatening to vote against the reshuffled government in a vote of confidence expected in February.

By-elections

The NCP's hope to establish itself as the largest parliamentary party was dashed when the UCPN won three by-elections on Jan. 24 bringing its strength up to 90 seats in the 205-member House of Representatives. By-elections in two further constituencies, postponed from Jan. 24, were held on Jan. 26 and were won by the NCP thereby increasing its legislative strength to 88 seats.

■ **Last article p. 41269; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

SINGAPORE

General election

A general election was held in Singapore on Jan. 2. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP), led by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, won 81 seats in the 83-member unicameral Parliament. The result was significantly better than in the previous election held in 1991 [see p. 38397], when the PAP had made its worst ever electoral showing by losing four seats. Goh described the election as a referendum on his performance in office, and stated that the victory demonstrated that Singapore's voters had rejected "Western-style liberal democracy".

The nine-day election campaign was fiercely contested and was dominated by PAP attacks on Tang Liang Hong, parliamentary candidate for the opposition Workers' Party (WP) in the Cheng San constituency. The PAP administration had accused Tang of support for pro-Chinese and anti-Christian policies which would, it maintained, threaten the position of minority ethnic groups in Singapore. The election was widely described as a personal victory for Goh who, unchallenged in his own constituency, had staked his reputation on a PAP victory in the multi-seat constituency of Cheng San and on blocking Tang's entry to Parliament. However, the PAP government was criticized by some sections of the Western media for electoral tactics which reportedly included the threat of withdrawal of government funding for housing renovation projects in any constituency which returned an opposition candidate.

In the event the trend of declining support for the PAP demonstrated in the 1991 election was reversed. The PAP share of the vote rose to 65 per cent from 61 per cent in 1991.

Prior to the start of campaigning, the opposition parties had announced their intention to fight only 36 seats, thus guaranteeing the government an absolute majority even before voting took place. The two seats actually won by the opposition went to Low Thia Khiang of the WP and Chiam See Tong of the Singapore People's Party, both of whom retained their seats at Hougang and Potong Pasir respectively. A third opposition seat, in the form of a non-constituency member of Parliament, was offered to the WP in order to meet the constitutional requirement that a minimum of three opposition MPs must hold seats within the legislature. The Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) which had gained three seats in 1991 failed to maintain any presence in the new Parliament. The SDP leader, Chee Soon Juan lost his seat after a campaign in which government leaders had accused him of deceit and had described him as a "proven liar".

Flight of Tang to Malaysia

Tang fled to Malaysia shortly after the PAP election victory, claiming that he and his family had received anonymous death threats.

During the campaign he had been accused by senior government ministers of being a "Chinese chauvinist" who wanted to sow discord between Singapore's ethnic Chinese majority and minority Malays and Indians. Tang lodged a complaint with the police during the campaign concerning the allegations, and this was published in a number of newspapers. In response, senior government ministers filed 11 law suits against Tang for defamation of character. Included among those seeking legal redress was Lee Kuan Yew (former Prime Minister and current Senior Minister) who accused Tang of portraying Singapore as a "terrorist state". Government officials also carried out raids on Tang's home and office on Jan. 27 and sequestered S$11,000,000 in assets (US$1.00=S$1.41 as at Jan 24). It was reported that Tang had visited London at the end of the month in order to obtain legal advice, but that he planned to return to Singapore to face the charges.

Government reshuffle

Goh announced a limited Cabinet reshuffle on Jan 18. Posts affected were as follows:

+**Yeo Cheow Tong** Health; Environment
+**Brig.-Gen. George Yeo** Information and the Arts; Second Minister for Trade and Industry
+**Rear Adml. Teo Chee Hean** Education; Second Minister for Defence
+**Lee Yock Suan** Trade and Industry; Second Minister for Finance
+**Mah Bow Tan** Communications

+Altered Responsibilities.

■ **Last article pp. 41374-75; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

INDONESIA

Ethnic unrest in Kalimantan and Java

The province of west Kalimantan, in the Indonesian part of the island of Borneo, suffered four days of rioting in early January as violence broke out between ethnic tribespeople and migrants.

Beginning on Dec. 31, thousands of native Dyaks ran amok after an incident on the previous day at a local pop concert when two tribespeople had been stabbed by a settler from Madura, an island east of Java. Countless homes belonging to Madurese migrants were looted and burned in the subsequent disturbances and some 2,700 people were forced to flee to neighbouring districts, At least two Dyaks and three Madurese settlers were killed in the violence.

The rioting brought renewed attention to Indonesia's transmigration programme which, since 1971, had forcibly resettled more than 14 million people from densely populated islands to more remote regions.

Rioting also occurred on Jan. 30 in the Javanese town of Rengasdengklok, 70 km east of the capital Jakarta. Thousands of Muslims looted and burned churches, banks and shops after a rumour had circulated that a trader of Chinese descent had complained that the call to prayer from a mosque near his house was too loud. The violence followed a similar incident in December in the west Java town of Tasikmalaya [see p. 41413], and was indicative of widespread resentment over the income disparities between the Muslim majority and the affluent Chinese minority.

Publication of parliamentary election candidates list

A final list of 2,293 candidates for the general election scheduled for May 1997 was issued on Jan. 20. The list excluded the ousted leader of the opposition Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), Megawati Sukarnoputri.

The list included four children of President Suharto, together with his half-brother, a daughter-in-law and a cousin. Various high-profile business people, media stars and wives of generals and politicians were also among the candidates for the ruling Golkar which had won all six previous elections under Suharto by overwhelming majorities.

1997-98 budget

The *Financial Times* of Jan. 7 published details of Indonesia's 1997-98 budget [for details of 1996-97 budget see p. 40908].

Expenditure was set to rise to 101,087 billion rupiah (US$1.00=Rp2363.00 as at Jan. 10), an increase of 11.6 per cent compared with 1996-97. It was the first time spending had exceeded the 100,000 billion rupiah mark. Some 19,237 billion rupiah (30.9 per cent) of routine government spending was earmarked to service Indonesia's foreign debt—which stood at more than US$100 billion—compared with 22 per cent in the previous budget. Few details were provided concerning revenue, although it was assumed that planned spending would be at least met by tax revenues as Indonesia was legally committed to a balanced budget. The government was reported to have registered a small surplus in 1996-97.

According to figures released alongside the budget, Indonesia anticipated a current account deficit of US$8.8 billion in 1996-97, widening to US$9.8 billion in 1997-98. However, as a percentage of GDP, the deficit was expected to remain constant at around 4 per cent of GDP.

■ **Last article p. 41413; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement**

VIETNAM

Imposition of death sentences in corruption cases

Six people were sentenced to death in January following two high-profile corruption trials in Ho Chi Minh City. Those condemned included Pham Huy Phuoc, the former head of Tamexco, the import-export business of the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), who was sentenced on Jan. 31.

Phuoc was found guilty of embezzling money provided via bank loans to finance the purchase of a US$200,000 villa for his mistress, and to pay for

his gambling debts. The trial saw 20 defendants charged with corruption, and the three others sentenced to death included the former head of Vietcombank, the country's largest state-owned bank, and the former chairman of FirstVina, a joint venture involving the South Korean company Daewoo. All of the defendants were found guilty and those not sentenced to death received lengthy prison terms.

In a separate trial on Jan. 21 two men were sentenced to death by firing squad for their part in a fraudulent fertilizer scheme which embezzled the equivalent of US$11,000,000 from the state. In an apparent response to the high profile trials the CPV politburo issued new ethical guidelines for party members which made clear that any state or military official found guilty of defrauding the equivalent of US$27,000 or more would be executed or imprisoned for life. The guidelines also included a clause which demanded that all government officials disclose their assets.

Golf course riots

The *Financial Times* of Jan. 4 reported that riot police were involved in clashes with protesting farmers at the Kim No commune, north of Hanoi, over the New Year period.

The protest concerned the amount of compensation to be paid to farmers by the local authority for the loss of land as a result of plans to build a golf course. Similar demonstrations in May 1996 had left one woman dead and scores injured. Daewoo had been commissioned to build the course as part of a US$177 million project.

Super-highway agreement

A plan to build a new 1,800 km highway from the southernmost tip of Vietnam to the capital city Hanoi was announced on Jan. 22. It was estimated that the project would cost US$5.5 billion.

The *Financial Times* reported on Jan. 23 that doubts about the viability of the project—specifically how it would be financed—had been expressed by foreign observers. The government's announcement did not include a time frame for the project, but analysts speculated that a mass compulsory-labour programme, which was also announced in January, could be used to build the road. Under the new programme a large proportion of the population would be required to devote time to public-works projects.

Agreement of debt-repayment terms

On Jan. 17 Vietnam agreed with its London Club commercial creditors the precise terms of a US$900 million debt-repayment package. The agreement paved the way for the settlement of arrears owing since the 1970s. The *Financial Times* of Jan. 18/19 reported that the deal was set out in a "term sheet" listing a menu of options and refinancing mechanisms by which Vietnam's 120 or so creditors—mostly Japanese banks—could be repaid.

■ Last article p. 41374; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

BURMA

Withdrawal of PepsiCo

The *Financial Times* of Jan. 28 reported that PepsiCo, the US soft drink manufacturer, had announced that its complete withdrawal from the Burmese market would be completed by May 31. PepsiCo was one of the last major US companies with a significant presence in Burma.

The company had sold its stake in the Burmese company, which bottled Pepsi, in May 1995, but had maintained a contract with them to produce and market the product. PepsiCo said that it wanted to adhere to the "spirit of current US government foreign policy". Analysts suggested that the company had been placed under intense pressure from human rights groups and student organizations within the USA, and that this had influenced the decision to withdraw.

Sentencing of NLD Members

The Reuters news agency reported on Jan. 29 that the ruling junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), had announced that 14 people had been imprisoned for seven years for involvement in student protest in December 1996 [see p. 41412]. Five of those sentenced were reported to be members of the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD).

■ Last article p. 41412; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

PHILIPPINES

MILF peace talks

On Jan. 7 the government held preliminary peace talks with the Muslim secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF had not endorsed the Mindanao peace agreement signed by the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in September 1996 [see pp. 41275-76].

The government peace panel chairman, Fortunato Abat, suggested that the government was amenable to the MILF demand for self-government, but stressed that independence for the Moro people was not an option which the government would consider. Despite the recurrence of fighting later in the month, a cease-fire was reportedly implemented on Jan. 23. Further negotiations between Abat and MILF Vice-Chairman for political affairs, Ghadzali Jaafar, were scheduled to begin on Feb. 25.

■ Last article p. 41325; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

AFGHANISTAN

Continued advance by Talibaan militia

Throughout January the Talibaan militia, whose interim council currently formed the government, was reported to have made substantial military progress against the combined forces of the ethnic Uzbek leader, Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostam, and of former Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Masud [for Talibaan advances in late December 1996 see p. 41411].

Talibaan forces captured the strategically important airbase at Baghram and the town of Charikar before they moved north to take Jabal-os-Siraj, Gulbahar and Ghorband. The advance brought Talibaan forces into the Salang Pass and to within 20 km of the Soviet-built tunnel through the Hindu Kush mountain range, held by Dostam's forces. The defending force had to destroy several bridges to the south of the tunnel in order to prevent the Talibaan from storming the pass.

The fall of Jabal-os-Siraj brought the Talibaan closer to the Panjsher Valley and Masud's stronghold. According to The *Guardian* of Jan 31, Masud was forced to move his headquarters to Andarab, a town north of the Hindu Kush. The Talibaan advance meant that they had regained positions which they had held after driving Masud's force and the Tajik-dominated government from Kabul on Sept. 27, 1996 [see pp. 41267-8].

The Talibaan secured the territory which they had captured by forcing the civilian population back southwards to the capital, Kabul. Thousands of civilians marched up to 90 km to reach the city which, in early January, was still being subjected to air raids from Dostam's forces.

Progress of peace efforts

The UN-sponsored talks between the Talibaan and the Dostam-Masud opposition alliance resumed in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Jan. 13. The Talibaan offensive which had followed the talks indicated that efforts to broker a cease-fire by UN special envoy Norbert Holl [see p. 41366] had failed.

The Talibaan Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sher Mohammed Stanakzai, was reported to have rejected the proposed creation of a mixed Talibaan-opposition force to maintain order. According to a Jan. 13 report by the Agence

France Presse news agency, Stanakzai had also expressed misgivings concerning the deployment of an international peacekeeping force. He said that the deployment of such a force would be difficult to accomplish, and that "the Afghan people have never accepted the presence of foreign forces on their soil".

Government changes

The Talibaan-controlled Radio Voice of Shari'ah announced on Jan. 2 that Mowalwi Hafez Mohebollah had been appointed acting Minister of Commerce.

■ Last article p. 41411; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

TAJIKISTAN

Peace talks in Iran

Government and pro-Islamic rebel leaders held peace talks in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on Jan. 6-19. The talks followed the signing of a cease-fire and peace agreement in December [see p. 41412]. On the final day of the talks the two sides agreed on the composition of the 27-member National Reconciliation Commission, the establishment of which had been stipulated in the December peace agreement.

On Jan. 13 the two sides signed an agreement on the repatriation of Tajik refugees. The Iranian news agency IRNA reported on Jan. 15 that under the terms of the agreement the Tajik government assumed responsibility for the return of refugees and the provision of humanitarian and financial assistance to help them find employment and housing. The government also undertook to exempt the returning refugees from criminal prosecution for their part in the Tajik civil war.

■ Last article p. 41412; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

UZBEKISTAN

Law on political parties

A new law on political parties came into force on Jan. 7 which prohibited political parties based on ethnic or religious lines and those advocating the subversion of the constitutional order. Prospective parties would be obliged to submit details of at least 5,000 members, spread over eight provinces. Recognized parties would have the right to contest elections, publish newspapers and establish parliamentary and local groups.

■ Last articles pp. 41414; 41366; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

AUSTRALIA

Progress of weapons control programme

Attorney General and Minister of Justice Daryl Williams announced on Jan. 6 that more than 250,000 firearms had been surrendered since May 1996 as a result of the gun control legislation introduced in the wake of the killing of 35 people in Port Arthur in April 1996 [see pp. 41053; 41103]. Williams said that A$120 million [US$1.00=A$1.26 as at Jan. 3] had been paid in compensation to the owners of the weapons. The guns surrendered had included self-loading rifles and pump-action shotguns. Williams confirmed that Queensland, which had hitherto failed to participate in the programme, would begin compensating firearm owners and dealers later in January.

Further euthanasia deaths

With legislation proceeding through the federal parliament to override the Northern Territories' controversial Terminally Ill Act [see pp. 40958; 41195; 41276], two more terminally ill people took advantage of the voluntary euthanasia legislation to end their lives. Janet Mills, 52, who died on Jan. 2 was assisted by Philip Nitschke, the doctor who had assisted in the first death in September [see p. 41276]. The death of the third person, a 69-year-old man, was reported on Jan. 23.

■ Last article p. 41375; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Election of new President

On Jan. 14 the Nitijela (legislature) elected Imata Kabua as President to succeed Amata Kabua, the country's first elected head of state who had died in December [see pp. 41413-14].

The late President's cousin, Imata Kabua was elected on the first ballot, receiving 20 votes in the 33-member Nitijela. The other two contenders for the post, the Speaker of the Nitijela, Kessai Note, and a former ambassador to the USA, Wilfred Kendall, each won six votes. The new President said that he intended to retain all members of the previous Cabinet as a demonstration of his desire to maintain the status quo.

Kabua was a powerful traditional chief from the Kwajalein Atoll, the site of the US missile test facility. In the late 1970s and early 1980s he had led repeated "sail-in" protests at the facility in a successful bid to increase US rental payments to US$7,000,000 per year. Largely as the result of such payments, he was reported to be one of the richest people in the Marshall Islands.

■ Last article pp. 41413-14; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

ADF replenishment

The *Financial Times* of Jan. 18 reported that an agreement had been reached on the controversial seventh replenishment of the Asian Development Bank's soft-lending arm, the Asian Development Fund (ADF).

The US$6 billion replenishment had been in doubt after the USA had refused to pay arrears left over from the sixth replenishment [see p. 38154]. The USA eventually agreed to pay the arrears, but only after some of the newly prosperous Asian "tiger" economies had agreed to start or increase their contributions.

■ Last article p. 40557; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

IN BRIEF

KYRGYZSTAN: On Jan. 8 Topchubek Turgunaliyev, chair of the Erkin Kyrgyzstan Party, was found guilty of embezzlement and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

EUROPE

BULGARIA

Political and economic crisis

In January Bulgaria was subjected to a serious political crisis triggered by a comprehensive economic collapse. Daily anti-government demonstrations, strikes and a stand-off between the two main political forces meant that no forces meant that no agreement was reached on either the method or timing of economic reconstruction. With the value of the currency (the lev) plummeting, and inflation surging, warnings were issued at the end of January that Bulgaria was in danger of defaulting on its US$10 billion foreign debt.

In late January long queues were reported outside banks in Sofia, the capital, as people withdrew their deposits in the hope of converting them into dollars or German marks. The lev, which had stood at 70 to the US dollar in early 1996 and 495 at the start of 1997, was quoted on Bulgaria's interbank market on Jan. 31 at 1,730 to 1,900 to the US dollar. The *Independent* of Feb. 1 reported that the lev was "so worthless" that Bulgarians were investing their money in "cheap electrical appliances" as a preferred alternative to holding cash.

Background to crisis

While the economy had been deteriorating for much of 1996, the immediate crisis had erupted in December when Zhan Videnov had resigned as Prime Minister and leader of the ruling Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) [see pp. 41416-17]. The opposition, led by the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), pressed for an immediate dissolution of the National Assembly—last elected for a four-year term in December 1994 [see pp. 40328-29]—and demanded fresh elections. They were supported by many ordinary citizens, some of whom took to the streets in January, and by the new President, Petar Stoyanov (of the UDF) who had been elected in November 1996 [see pp. 41376-77], and who took office in mid-January.

The BSP, however, refused to dissolve the National Assembly and maintained that it had a constitutional right to appoint a new prime minister. The party argued that a currency control board system, as proposed by the IMF in November [see p. 41377], should be introduced before a dissolution, so that elections could take place in late 1997 in the context of greater economic stability. While the UDF also supported the introduction of a currency-control-board system, it denied the competence of the BSP to implement a stablization programme.

The currency-control-board system, which had helped underpin financial stability in the Baltic states, would operate by rigidly linking the volume of national currency in circulation to the hard-currency reserves of the central bank.

Nomination of new Prime Minister- Election of new BSP executive bureau

On Jan. 8 the BSP and its two small coalition partners—the Aleksandur Stamboliyski Agrarian Party and the Ecoglasnost Political Club—formally nominated Nikolay Dobrev, the Interior Minister, to replace Videnov as Prime Minister.

However, Videnov continued to exercise considerable influence within the party. On Jan. 3 the new BSP supreme council—which had been elected in December 1996 [see p. 41417]—chose a new 15-member executive bureau, the party's highest decision making body between congresses. The result of the election was seen as a victory for Videnov, the former chair, in that all of his most prominent opponents, including former Foreign Minister Georgi Pirinski, failed to win a seat on the bureau.

Mass opposition protests - Political stand-off between BSP and UDF

The UDF organized a mass rally in Sofia on Jan. 3 in support of its "Declaration for Bulgaria's Salvation", a document which demanded early parliamentary elections as a precondition for the party's support for the introduction of a currency-board system. After the Jan. 3 rally, UDF supporters held peaceful daily demonstrations in Sofia and other towns and cities at which calls were made for an early general election.

At a Jan. 10 National Assembly session the BSP voted against holding an extraordinary debate on the UDF's declaration. The UDF and other opposition parties walked out of the Assembly after the vote and began a boycott of parliament. Immediately afterwards, anti-government protesters broke into the National Assembly, smashed furniture and equipment and set fire to a room. Meanwhile, outside the Assembly, police used tear gas, clubs and blank cartridges to disperse large crowds of demonstrators. As many as 200 demonstrators were injured on the night of Jan. 10, many of whom suffered head wounds after being hit with clubs. Ten police officers were also injured.

The outgoing President, Zhelyu Zhelev, also of the UDF, responded to the growing crisis by announcing on Jan. 11 that he was not prepared to invite the BSP to form a new government, a task he had been scheduled to perform that day.

Zhelev announced on national television that "under these conditions I will not give a mandate for the formation of a new government". Instead, he said that he would convene a meeting of the National Security Council, a body which advised the President on internal and external security matters. Zhelev said that he backed "the protests of the people who have been driven to this humiliating state". Such people, he said, were "demonstrating their dignity".

On Jan. 12 the BSP agreed to enter into negotiations with the UDF, but again rejected calls to dissolve the Assembly and contest early elections. The BSP announcement came after a call for negotiation had been made by President-elect Stoyanov and the Assembly Speaker—and BSP supporter—Blagovest Sendov. It also came after some 100,000 people rallied in Sofia and tens of thousands more in cities nationwide in support of the UDF's demands. On Jan. 13 oil refinery workers and dockers began strikes in support of the opposition, while the country's largest union, the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, threatened to strike on Jan. 14.

The BSP appeared to capitulate to opposition demands on Jan. 13 when the party agreed in principle to hold an early general election "in the context of implementation of a national anti-crisis programme for the economic and financial stabilization of Bulgaria." The next day Stoyanov announced that he intended to appoint Dobrev as Prime Minister as an interim measure and call early elections for June or October.

Inauguration of Stoyanov as President - Continued BSP-UDF stand-off

Stoyanov was inaugurated as the new President on Jan. 19, although he did not formally replace Zhelev until Jan. 22. Stoyanov's inauguration ceremony in the National Assembly was witnessed by members of all parties and was the first occasion that the opposition had entered parliament since announcing their boycott.

In his inauguration speech, Stoyanov said that he was "convinced that the country needs early parliamentary elections and a new agreement between social forces and between the government and the governed". However, the President's powers were limited. Under the terms of the 1991 Constitution, he was obliged by law to offer the mandate to form a government to the candidate of the largest party (the BSP). Hence, on Jan. 27, Stoyanov announced that he would offer a formal mandate to the BSP on Jan. 28, as required by the Constitution. He appealed to the BSP to hand the mandate back and leave him free to form a caretaker cabinet "supported by all political forces and institutions". However, Dobrev effectively rejected Stoyanov's advice by announcing on Jan. 28 that he intended to form a broad-spectrum government of experts. The action was condemned by the UDF chair Ivan Kostov , who warned that "if the Socialists form a Cabinet it will last for only two or three months". The country's three main trade unions responded by calling a general strike from Jan. 30 to protest at the deepening economic crisis and to support opposition demands for immediate elections.

EU aid offer

The European Commission on Jan. 30 offered Bulgaria a "substantial" financial aid package conditional upon its leaders resolving the political crisis. The offer followed an appeal for assistance from President Stoyanov who visited Brussels in late January for talks with EU and NATO officials. Stoyanov had told EU officials on Jan. 29 that Bulgaria was in danger of defaulting on its US$10 billion foreign debt.

Reported release of Zhivkov

Todor Zhivkov, 85, Bulgaria's communist leader from 1954 until November 1989, was reportedly released from house arrest on Jan. 21. Zhivkov had in September 1992 been

found guilty of the misappropriation of state funds and embezzlement and had been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment [see p. 39104].

■ **Last article pp. 41416-17; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

ALBANIA

Collapse of pyramid finance schemes

Serious social unrest was triggered in January by the collapse of a string of pyramid finance schemes in Albania. The collapse of an estimated nine schemes—some of which had been operating for several years—was set to affect Europe's poorest country much harder than the earlier demise of similar schemes elsewhere in eastern Europe. Estimates of the sums attracted to the schemes were as high as US$1 billion. Many people suffered massive losses having sold houses, land and livestock to invest in the schemes at the height of the pyramid fever in late 1996.

The value of the Albanian currency, the lek, fell sharply as the mounting financial and political crisis hit the small foreign exchange market operated by dealers in the streets around the central bank. The *Financial Times* of Feb. 1 reported that the lek, previously one of the most stable currencies in the emerging markets of eastern Europe, had fallen by 12 per cent against the US dollar in the past two weeks.

Background to collapse

Informal deposit-taking had blossomed during the early 1990s. In the absence of an effective banking system and in a period when the economy had been largely financed through remittances from Albanians working abroad and from smuggling. Unlike in other eastern European countries where pyramid schemes were short-lived affairs, in Albania some such schemes had been operating for a number of years. Indeed, a large proportion of the population, unable to survive on meagre state wages and pensions, had come to rely on them.

Some reports claimed that the longer-lasting pyramid schemes were also businesses for laundering "dirty money". The *Independent* of Jan. 31 alleged that Albania had become "a haven for dirty money from elsewhere in the world", largely because the commission charge for laundering was significantly lower than in Switzerland or other traditional centres. The report also raised as a "hypothesis" the notion that the ruling Democratic Party of Albania (PDS) had used the schemes both as a money-recycling operation and, with the high interest payments, as "a way of buying political support from the people". Hence, the report concluded, it was not true that ordinary Albanians had been "duped" by the schemes, but rather that "they understood how they worked and believed they would continue because a collapse would mean the destruction of the entire ruling order".

The situation was also complicated by the fact that some of Albania's fastest growing private sector companies, such as Vefa Holdings, had used informal deposit-taking channels to finance spectacular growth. Vefa—a conglomerate with a wide range of operations—was one of Albania's biggest employers. The *Financial Times* of Feb. 1 quoted a senior Albanian official as describing Vefa as a "state within a state". Although Vefa was under investigation by a government transparency commission [see below], its founder and head, Vehbi Alimucaj, was reported to enjoy close links with the PDS and Prime Minister Alexander Meksi.

The schemes had started to cause domestic and international concern in late 1995. The Central Bank Act, approved in early 1996, prohibited deposit taking by any organization other than a licensed bank. In response to warnings from the IMF and other international financial institutions, the government established in November a transparency commission to investigate the operation of informal deposit-taking schemes.

Banning of pyramid schemes - Freezing of Xhaferri and Populli assets

The People's Assembly (the legislature) passed a law on Jan. 23 banning pyramid schemes and setting penalties of up to 20 years in prison for operators. However, most of the schemes had collapsed by Jan. 23. Some—such as Sude and Gjallica—did so without any apparent funds in the state banking system. However, two schemes—Xhaferri and Populli—had funds totalling US$230 million placed on deposit at the state-owned National Commercial Bank and the government was able to freeze their accounts. Cash recovered in subsequent raids on the two schemes' offices raised an additional US$70,000,000.

The Cabinet met on Jan. 31 and approved a law aimed at establishing procedures for distributing this US$300 million to more than 200,000 savers. Only a small part was to be repaid in cash, with the remainder being placed in limited-access time-deposit accounts at state-owned banks in an attempt to avert a sudden surge in the rate of inflation.

Outbreak of violent demonstrations

The collapse of the schemes prompted violent demonstrations and unrest in the capital, Tirana, and other Albanian cities, particularly in the south of the country.

On Jan. 26 angry crowds set fire to buildings in towns across southern Albania as the protests mounted. Thousands of demonstrators marched through Tirana where they clashed with police. The People's Assembly responded late on Jan. 26 by granting special powers to the President to restore order. These included the use of troops to unblock roads and to guard government buildings. On Jan. 27, armed troops took up positions around the central bank and state television headquarters in Tirana.

■ **Last article p. 41331; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

YUGOSLAVIA

Mass protests in Serbia

Mass protests against the regime of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic continued throughout January (Serbia and Montenegro being the two constituent states of the rump Yugoslavia). Daily anti-government demonstrations had started in late November 1996 in protest over the government's reluctance to recognize victories by the opposition Zajedno coalition in municipal elections held that month [see pp. 41414-15].

Continuing protests

Students continued to hold daily rallies in Belgrade (the capital) throughout January, despite an Interior Ministry ban on marches imposed in late December [see p. 41415]. At night, thousands of people congregated to protest by blowing whistles and banging pots and pans.

Large crowds of anti-government protesters gathered in central Belgrade on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. However, in his New Year address to the nation, Milosevic failed to mention the protests, referring only to "internal and external interference" in Serbian affairs. Opposition protesters brought central Belgrade to a standstill on Jan. 5 by filling the city's roads with slow-moving traffic. The use of cars was a ploy to circumvent the Interior Ministry order banning marches. The protesters on Jan. 5 included Dragoslav Avramovic, who had been dismissed as governor of the central bank in May 1996 [see p. 41113]. A massive demonstration was also held in Belgrade on Jan. 7, Serbian Orthodox Christmas Day. In a new tactic, the demonstrators sought to kiss and hug riot police posted in the city. In a speech directed at the police, Vuk Draskovic, leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO, a component of the opposition Zajedno coalition), said that the police were "also part of the people".

Support for opposition from Orthodox Church

In a highly significant development on Jan. 2, the Serbian Orthodox Church offered its support to the opposition.

After meeting in emergency session, the Church's ruling council issued a statement which accused Milosevic of "falsifying votes", setting "Serb against Serb" and of "strangling political and

religious freedoms". The statement was a blow to the Milosevic regime which had usually been supported by the Church. On Jan. 27 tens of thousands of opposition protesters joined a procession through Belgrade led by the patriarch of the Orthodox Church, His Holiness Pavle.

Meeting between army chief and student leaders

Col.-Gen. Momcilo Perisic, the Chief of General Staff of the Yugoslav army, met with student leaders on Jan. 6. After the meeting, one of the student leaders, Dusan Vasiljevic, said that Perisic had assured him that there would be "no repeat of 1991", when Milosevic had ordered soldiers onto the streets of Belgrade to break up anti-government protests [see pp. 38080-81].

The student delegation also met with the Serbian Interior Minister, Zoran Sokolovic, who refused their demand to lift the order banning marches.

The *Independent* of Jan. 7 reported that "officers and elite units" in the Yugoslav army were prepared to launch a revolt against the Serbian government if Milosevic ordered a violent crackdown against the opposition. The report, citing sources in the army, said that roughly half of the permanent members of the army, as well as the vast majority of conscripts, were sympathetic to the demonstrators.

Relations between Milosevic and the army had deteriorated rapidly since the end of the war in Bosnia. Milosevic was therefore heavily reliant on the 120,000-strong police force which for many commentators was tantamount to the President's private army.

OSCE deliberations on municipal elections

The Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) met in Vienna on Jan. 3 to discuss an OSCE report on the November municipal elections which had been prepared in December by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez Marquez [see p. 41415]. The council affirmed Gonzalez's report which had found that Zajedno had won all those elections which had been subsequently invalidated by Serbian courts and electoral commissions. The council called for complete official recognition of this result by the Milosevic regime.

The Yugoslavian Foreign Minister, Milan Milutinovic, who had formally invited the Gonzalez delegation to Serbia in December, responded to the OSCE statement by letter on Jan. 3, in which he conceded that the opposition had won a majority of seats in elections held in nine districts of the capital, Belgrade. Notwithstanding this admission, the opposition leaders said that they would continue to protest until all Zajedno victories were recognized.

The OSCE met in Vienna on Jan. 16 and again urged Milosevic to give immediate recognition to the opposition victories.

Mediation effort by Greek foreign minister - Meeting of Contact Group

Milosevic and the leaders of Zajedno held talks with the visiting Greek Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangolos, on Jan. 12. The visit was widely portrayed as a form of informal mediation. Although Greece was a traditional ally of Serbia, Pangolos called on Milosevic to abide by the OSCE ruling and recognize the opposition's electoral victories. The latter was reported, however, to have refused to do so.

The five-nation Contact Group on former Yugoslavia (comprising the USA, Russia, Germany, France and the UK) met in Brussels on Jan. 12 to discuss the Serbian crisis. John Kornblum, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs and a member of the US delegation, announced after the meeting that the US government was considering the imposition of a unilateral freeze on trade with Serbia.

Meeting of Supreme Defence Council

Milosevic convened the Yugoslav Supreme Defence Council on Jan. 16 to discuss the crisis. The Council included Montenegrin President Momir Bulatovic and the top echelons of the Yugoslav armed forces.

A statement issued after the meeting said that the Council "lent its support to the Republic of Serbia to resolve, within the institutions of its political system, the problems which have arisen in a number of municipalities over the local elections".

Further manoeuvring over election results

On Jan. 8 the Serbian Ministry of Justice issued a statement conceding that Zajedno and not the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) had won the municipal election in Nis, Serbia's second city. The announcement indicated mounting pressure from within the Milosevic regime to find a solution to the crisis.

In its statement, the ministry recommended that the local election commission in Nis restore the Zajedno victory. On Dec. 15 a court in Nis had made a similar recommendation [see pp. 41414-15]. However, on Jan. 13, the Nis election commission announced its rejection of the recommendations of both the ministry and the court.

In a surprise move on Jan. 14, the Belgrade election commission reinstated the Zajedno win in the election for the city assembly. Shortly after the announcement had been made, the electoral commission in Nis made a similar announcement, thereby reversing its earlier decision. The Belgrade announcement was made by Radomir Lazarevic, the electoral commission chief, who insisted that he had not been subjected to "blackmail" or "pressure". Following the announcement, SPS leaders in Belgrade made it clear that they would contest the commission's ruling, again fuelling speculation of deep divisions between hard-liners and moderates within the Milosevic regime.

On Jan. 20, the municipal court in Belgrade responded to the SPS challenge by suspending the Jan. 14 electoral commission ruling. The court president, Dragoljub Jankovic, said that Serbia's Supreme Court should rule on which court should decide the matter. An SPS appeal to a municipal court in Nis was, however, rejected on Jan. 17.

Death of Montenegrin minister

Janko Jeknic, the Montenegrin Foreign Minister, was killed in a car crash on Jan. 17.

■ Last article pp. 41414-15; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Formation of Bosnian Cabinet

In its first full session, the Assembly of the Union (the all-Bosnian parliament, elected in September—see pp. 41278-80), met on Jan. 3 and approved a Cabinet. The Bosnian Presidency had agreed on the choice of a Muslim, Haris Silajdzic, and a Serb, Boro Bosic, as Co-Chairs in December [see p. 41416]. The distribution of portfolios was as follows:

Haris Silajdzic Co-Chair
Boro Bosic Co-Chair
Neven Tomic Deputy Chair
Jadranko Prlic Foreign Minister
Hasan Muratovic Foreign Trade and Economy
Spasoje Albijanic Communications

Tomic, a Croat, had served as Minister of Foreign Trade and International Communications in the government of the Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The Republic had formally transferred all of its powers to the (Muslim-Croat) Federation in December [see p. 41416]. Prlic, also a Croat, and Muratovic, a Muslim, had also served in the Republican government as, respectively, Foreign Minister and Prime Minister. Albijanic was a Bosnian Serb.

Donor conference

A conference aimed at preparing the ground for a full-scale Bosnian donor conference in March was held in Brussels on Jan. 9-10. The conference was notable for the attendance of a united Bosnian government delegation which included ministers and officials from both the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

The Agence France Presse news agency on Jan. 9 described the performance of the Bosnian delegation as a "shaky debut". The report claimed that Albijanic had complained that he had not been given equal treatment with Muratovic.

Appeal by war criminal

It was reported on Jan. 3 that Drazen Erdemovic, a Bosnian Croat and the first person to be imprisoned for war crimes by the Hague-based UN International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, had launched an appeal against the 10-year sentence handed down to him in November 1996 [see pp. 41378].

■ Last article pp. 41415-16; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

CROATIA

Granting of licence to opposition radio station

The government-controlled Telecommunications Council granted a five-year licence to the Zagreb-based radio station Radio 101 on Jan. 24. The radio station was highly popular with young Croats and was the main mouthpiece of the country's liberal and left-wing opposition.

In November the Telecommunications Council had awarded the frequency used by Radio 101 to a rival station, a move which provoked mass demonstrations in Zagreb. The Council quickly reversed its decision in response to the demonstrations, but the future of Radio 101 had been in doubt until the Jan. 24 announcement.

Speculation concerning Tudjman's health

There was much speculation in late 1996 and early 1997 over the health of President Franjo Tudjman.

After Tudjman spent some time in a Washington hospital in November, US sources informed the media that Tudjman had inoperable stomach cancer. While Tudjman's aides denied this allegation, the President's public appearances after returning from the US were limited and often excessively stage-managed. In early December, for example, he was shown on Croatian television playing tennis with his entire government in attendance.

Developments in eastern Slavonia

The Croatian government in early January delivered a Memorandum on the Completion of the Peaceful Reintegration of eastern Slavonia to Maj.-Gen. Jacques Klein, administrator of the UN transitional administration in eastern Slavonia.

The memorandum reportedly attempted to resolve the contentious issue of voting rights for the largely Serb population of eastern Slavonia. It also offered Croatian Serbs several senior posts in the regional government and gave Serbian men the option of choosing not to perform compulsory military service in the Croatian armed forces.

On Dec. 6 the UN announced that international donors had pledged over US$30,000,000 to help reconstruction in eastern Slavonia.

■ Last article p. 41416; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

SLOVENIA

Re-election of Drnovsek as Prime Minister

The State Chamber—the lower house of the bicameral legislature, the National Assembly—re-elected Janez Drnovsek as Prime Minister on Jan. 9. Drnovsek, leader of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), was re-elected by the narrow margin of 46 to 44 votes.

The centre-left LDS had emerged as the strongest party in the 90-member State Chamber with 25 seats after November's general election [see pp. 41378-79]. The LDS also secured the support of several smaller left-wing parties which controlled a total of 20 seats, thereby increasing its overall strength to 45 seats. However, the centre-right opposition Slovene Spring alliance—comprising the Slovene People's Party (SLS), the Christian Democrats of Slovenia (SKD) and the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (SDS)—also controlled 45 seats. The deadlock was broken on Jan. 8 when a deputy from the SKD announced his defection from the party. Ciril Pucko said that he would sit in the Chamber as an independent and would support Drnovsek's candidacy because "we have economic and social problems that have to be solved not today, but yesterday".

■ Last article pp. 41378-79; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

RUSSIA

Attempt to remove President Yeltsin

President Boris Yeltsin was once again incapacitated by illness in January, prompting an attempt by legislators to remove him from office.

Yeltsin had reappeared in public in December, following major heart surgery the previous month [see p. 41418]. However, having cancelled his scheduled appointments on Jan. 6 due to a "heavy cold", he was hospitalized on Jan. 8. It was subsequently revealed that he was suffering from double pneumonia. According to the *Financial Times* of Jan. 25, however, Yeltsin had worked for only 11 days since his re-election as Russian President in July, 1996.

On Jan. 14 impeachment proceedings against Yeltsin were initiated by the chairman of the State Duma security committee, Viktor Ilyukhin, a prominent member of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). The bill, presented to the State Duma, called for "the premature cessation of the powers of the President, due to his persistent inability to perform his duties for health reasons". On Jan. 22, deputies voted 229 to 63 on its first reading to support the bill "in principle". In constitutional terms, however, there was confusion about the bill's validity. Whilst Article 92 of the Constitution included a provision for the early cessation of the President's powers in the event of his becoming incapacitated, it did not specify by whom this decision should be taken.

Deputies from the liberal Yabloko and the pro-government Our Home is Russia factions walked out of the sitting in protest over the attempt to remove Yeltsin's powers.

Confusion surrounding the bill was intensified when it was reported by Yeltsin's supporters that the bill had been defeated on its second reading later that day. However, according to reports in the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian*, this later vote had actually involved procedural issues concerning the timing of the second reading, rather than the bill itself. According to this interpretation, deputies had voted to reject a proposed second reading on Jan. 22.

In what was widely seen as an effort to stem speculation about his health, Yeltsin appeared at his Kremlin office on Jan. 22, reportedly against medical advice. He had been discharged from hospital on Jan. 20. However, on Jan. 27 his visit to the Netherlands, which had been scheduled to begin on Feb. 3, was cancelled for health reasons.

In this context, it appeared that a consensus was building over the inadvisability of Yeltsin continuing in office. An editorial in *Izvestiya* of Jan. 10 admitted that Yeltsin was seriously ill and expressed concern for the country's stability. The chief-of-staff in the president's administration, Anatoly Chubais, admitted in an interview in the *Trud* newspaper of Jan. 21 that Yeltsin's illness "does make things more complicated, both in terms of day-to-day work and in terms of undermining stability in the country as a whole".

Final reading of budget - Inflation figures

The 1997 budget cleared its fourth and final reading in the Russian State Duma by 245 votes to 90, it was reported on Jan. 28 [for details of budget see p. 41418].

The annual rate of inflation for 1996 was reported on Jan. 6 as standing at 21.8 per cent. This was the lowest figure since 1990. The target annual inflation figure in the 1997 budget was 11.8 per cent.

Local elections

Gubernatorial elections in Russia's constituent republics and other territorial units were held throughout the latter months of 1996 and continued into early 1997. Although 52 of Russia's 89 regions and republics were to have held elections by the end of 1996, second round run-offs and various delays reduced the number of elections completed by the end of January 1997 to 47. In October 1993, during the conflict between president and legislature, Yeltsin had dismissed the heads of a significant number of regional administrations and replaced them with his own appointees. Only around half of these were returned to office in the elections, thereby weakening Yeltsin's position in the upper house of the legislature.

The Russian Federation consisted of 89 territorial units: 21 republics; one autonomous oblast (region); 49 administrative oblasts; six krais (provinces); 10 autonomous okrugs (ao) (districts); and the cities of Moscow and St Petersburg. Since December 1995 the Council of the Federation (upper house of the legislature) had been composed of two representatives from each unit: the heads of the local legislature and executive. Gubernatorial elections thus also determined the composition of the upper house. (Between December 1993 and December 1995, the Council of the Federation had been directly elected, with two representatives from each territorial unit).

Further elections were scheduled for Feb. 2 (Agin Buryat ao); March 16 (Republic of Tuva); March 23 (Amur oblast), the result of the election on Sept. 22 [see p. 41280] having been annulled; and April, 1997 (Krasnoyarsk krai; Orel oblast). [For previous local election results see pp. 39826; 40109; 40692; 41151]

■ **Last article pp. 41418-19; for key 1996 events see 1997 reference supplement.**

Summary of gubernatorial elections

Region	*name of winner*	*% of vote*	*date of election*	*% turnout*	*political affiliation**
Adygeya (Republic of)	Aslan Dzharimov	58 %	Jan. 12	n/a	incumbent
Altai krai	Aleksandr Surikov	49 %	Dec. 1+	56 %	PPUR
Arkhangelsk oblast	Anatoly Yefremov	58 %	Dec. 22+	n/a	incumbent
Astrakhan oblast	Anatoly Guzhvin	52 %	Dec. 8	n/a	incumbent
Bryansk oblast	Yury Lodkin	55 %	Dec. 8	50 %	PPUR
Chita oblast	Ravil Genyatulin	31 %	Oct. 27	46 %	incumbent
Chukotka ao	Aleksandr Nazarov	63 %	Dec. 22	n/a	incumbent
Ivanovo oblast	Vladislav Tikhomirov	50 %	Dec. 1	47 %	incumbent
Jewish auton. Oblast	Nikolai Volkov	72 %	Oct. 20	42 %	incumbent
Kabardino-Balkar Rep.	Valery Kokov	97 %	Jan. 12	97 %	incumbent
Kaliningrad oblast	Leonid Gorbenko	50 %	Oct. 20+	43 %	independent
Kaluga oblast	Valery Sudarenko	63 %	Nov. 10+	41 %	PPUR
Kamchatka oblast	Vladimir Biryukov	61 %	Dec. 1+	34 %	incumbent
Khabarovsk krai	Viktor Ishayev	77 %	Dec. 8	n/a	incumbent
Khakasiya Republic	Aleksei Lebed	71 %	Dec. 22+	n/a	Lebed
Khanty-Mansi ao	Aleksandr Filippenko	72 %	Oct. 27	47 %	incumbent
Kirov oblast	Vladimir Sergeyenkov	50 %	Oct. 20+	54 %	PPUR
Komi-Permyak ao	Nikolai Poluyanov	70 %	Nov. 17	57 %	incumbent
Koryak ao	Valentina Bronevich(*f*)	46 %	Nov. 17	58 %	independent
Kostroma oblast	Viktor Shershunov	64 %	Dec. 22+	n/a	PPUR
Krasnodar krai	Nikolai Kondratenko	82 %	Dec. 22+	47 %	PPUR
Kurgan oblast	Oleg Bogomolov	67 %	Dec. 8+	n/a	PPUR
Chelyabinsk oblast	Petr Sumin	54 %	Dec. 22	51 %	
Kursk oblast	Aleksandr Rutskoi	79 %	Oct. 20	57 %	PPUR
Leningrad oblast	Vadim Gustov	53 %	Sept. 29	34 %	independent
Magadan oblast	Valentin Tsvetkov	46 %	Nov. 3	n/a	independent
Marii-El (Rep. Of)	Vyacheslav Kislitsyn	59 %	Jan. 4+	63 %	PPUR
Murmansk oblast	Yury Yevdokimov	44 %	Dec. 1+	n/a	Lebed
Nenets ao	Vladimir Butov	49 %	Dec. 13+	n/a	independent
Perm oblast	Gennady Igumnov	65 %	Dec. 22+	39 %	incumbent
Pskov oblast	Yevgeny Mikhailov	56 %	Nov. 3+	60 %	LDPR
Rostov oblast	Vladimir Chub	62 %	Sept. 29	42 %	incumbent
Ryazan oblast	Vyacheslav Lyubimov	56 %	Dec. 22+	n/a	PPUR
Sakha/Yakutiya (Rep. of)	Mikhail Nikolayev	60 %	Dec. 22	64 %	incumbent
Sakhalin oblast	Igor Farkhutdinov	39 %	Oct. 20	33 %	incumbent
Samara oblast	Konstantin Titov	63 %	Dec. 1	52 %	incumbent
Saratov oblast	Dmitry Ayatskov	81 %	Sept. 1	60 %	incumbent
Stavropol krai	Aleksandr Chernogorov	55 %	Nov. 17+	65 %	PPUR
Taimyr ao	Gennady Nedelin	64 %	Dec. 22	30 %	incumbent
Tyumen oblast	Leonid Roketsky	59 %	Jan. 12+	25 %	incumbent
Ulyanovsk oblast	Yury Goryachev	43 %	Dec. 22	n/a	incumbent
Ust-Orda Buryat ao	Valery Maleyev	37 %	Nov. 17	59 %	independent
Vladimir oblast	Nikolai Vinogradov	63 %	Dec. 8	n/a	PPUR
Volgograd oblast	Nikolai Maksyuta	51 %	Dec. 29+	n/a	PPUR
Vologda oblast	Vyacheslav Pozgalev	80 %	Oct. 6	45 %	incumbent
Voronezh oblast	Ivan Shabanov	49 %	Dec. 8	n/a	PPUR
Yamal-Nenets ao	Yury Neyelov	68 %	Oct. 13	49 %	incumbent

+Second round run-off
PPUR Communist and nationalist alliance formed August, 1996 [see p. 41234]
LDPR Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, led by extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky
Lebed candidate supported by Yeltsin opponent Aleksandr Lebed.
n/a Not available.
*Most incumbents were supporters of Yeltsin
(f) denotes women

Elections in Chechenya

Presidential elections in the separatist Russian republic of Chechenya took place on Jan. 27. Aslan Maskhadov, the former chief-of-staff of the Chechen army and Prime Minister in the interim government, who had negotiated the peace agreement with Russia in August 1996 [see pp. 41235-36], won a clear first-round victory. Maskhadov, who was viewed by the Russian government as the most moderate of the candidates, nevertheless pledged after his election to pursue Chechenya's independence from Russia.

Maskhadov also flatly refused to participate in the Federation Council—the upper chamber of the Russian legislature—to which his election as President of one of the Russian Federation's constituent territorial units guaranteed him a seat. Russia's Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, warned a Russian Council of Ministers' meeting on Jan. 9: "there is a real danger that Chechenya will leave Russia de jure and de facto." Maskhadov's main rival, military leader Shamil Basayev, whose most notorious action had been the capture of over 1,000 hostages in the southern Russian town of Budennovsk in June 1995 [see pp. 40608-09], came second in the election. Third place was won by the incumbent President, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

The Chechen Central Electoral Commission published the official results on Feb. 2. The turnout of 407,699 constituted 79.4 per cent of the electorate, with 4 per cent of papers (16,327 votes) being deemed invalid.

Chechenya presidential elections

Candidate	votes cast	% of votes
Aslan Maskhadov	241,950	59.3
Shamil Basayev	95,841	23.5
Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev	41,183	10.1
10 others	12,398	7.1

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which had sent 72 observers to monitor the elections, confirmed that there had been no irregularities in their conduct. On Jan. 28, head of the OSCE mission, Tim Guldiman, described the elections as "democratic and legitimate".

Withdrawal of remaining troops-Renaming of capital city

The chief-of-staff of Russia's Interior Ministry troops, Gen. Pavel Maslov, announced on Jan. 5 that all Interior Ministry troops had been withdrawn from Chechenya. This followed the withdrawal of Defence Ministry troops in December [see pp. 41418-19].

It was reported on Jan. 24 that the Chechen capital, Grozny, had been renamed Dzhokhar Ghala (City of Dzhokhar) in honour of the late separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev who had led the early stages of Chechenya's struggle for independence. Dudayev had been killed in a rocket attack in April 1996 [see p. 41061].

BELARUS

New government

Following the approval of a new Constitution in November 1996 [see p. 41381], President Alyaksandr Lukashenka approved changes to the structure of the Belarusian government. A presidential decree of Jan. 14 stated that henceforth the Council of Ministers was to include the chairs of state committees, the head of the presidential administration, and the chair of the state control committee. Several new ministerial appointments were also made.

The acting Prime Minister Syargey Ling, who had been appointed in November, remained unconfirmed in his post. Minister of Foreign Affairs Uladzimir Syanko was replaced by Deputy Foreign Minister, Ivan Antanovich; whilst Lt.-Gen. Alyaksandr Chumakow was confirmed as Defence Minister, a post which he had held since November 1996 [see p. 41381]. Both

Chumakow and Antanovich were known to be strong advocates of closer ties between Belarus and Russia.

As at Jan. 15, the composition of the Council of Ministers was as follows:

Syargey Ling Acting Prime Minister
Pyotr Prakapovich First Deputy Prime Minister
Uladzimir Garkun Deputy Prime Minister
Vasil Dalgalyow Deputy Prime Minister
Valery Kokaraw Deputy Prime Minister
Uladzimir Rusakevich Deputy Prime Minister
Vasil Lyavonaw Agriculture and Food
Genadz Navitski Architecture and Construction
Ivan Bambiza CIS Affairs
Uladzimir Gancharenka Communications
Alyaksandr Sasnowski Culture
Lt. Gen. Alyaksandr Chumakow Defence
***Uladzimir Shymaw** Economy
Vasil Strazhaw Education
Ivan Kenik Emergency Situations
Alyaksandr Sazonaw Enterprise and Investment
***Mikalay Rumas** Finance (acting)
***Ivan Antanovich** Foreign Affairs
Mikhail Marynich Foreign Economic Relations
Valyantsin Zorin Forestry
Valyantsin Gerasimaw Fuel and Energy
***(vacant)** Health
Barys Batura Housing and Municipal Services
***Anatol Kharlap** Industry
Maj. Gen. Valyantsin Agalets Internal Affairs
***Genadz Varantsow** Justice
Ivan Lyakh Labour
Mikhail Rusy Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
Volga Dargel *(f)* Social Security
***Uladzimir Makeychyk** Sport and Tourism
***Vasil Novak** State Property and Privatization
Uladzimir Nichyparovich Statistics and Analysis
Pyotr Kazlow Trade
***(vacant)** Transport

Chairmen of state committees forming part of Cabinet

Alyaksandr Mikhalchanka Archives and Records
Rygor Fyodaraw Aviation
Alyaksandr Pawlowski Border Troops
Pyotr Krechka Customs
Lew Dubovik Energy and Energy Supervision
Anatol Dastanka Higher Appraisal
Yury Pakumeyka Hydrometeorology
Georhiy Kuznyatsow Land Resources, Geodesy and Cartography
Valery Kudashow Patents
Uladzimir Zamyatalin Press
Alyaksandr Belyk Religious and Ethnic Affairs
Viktar Gaysyonak Science and Technology
Valery Karashkow Standardization, Metrology and Certification
Uladzimir Matskevich State Security (KGB)
Mikalay Dzyamchuk Taxation
Alyaksandr Paznyak Youth Affairs
Mikhail Myasnikovich Head of Presidential Administration
Mikalay Damashkevich State Control Committee

*New appointment.
Women are denoted by *(f)*.

Election of chairman of Legislature - Appointments to judiciary

The upper house of the new legislature, the Council of the Republic, elected Pavel Shypuk as its chairman, and Tamara Dutko its deputy chairwoman at a session on Jan. 13. Both were elected unanimously by the 58 deputies present. [For election of chairman of lower house see p. 41381.]

A number of presidential decrees, issued on Jan. 4 in connection with the new Constitution, appointed senior members of the judiciary. Ryhor Vasilevich was named chairman of the Constitutional Court [for resignation of former chairman see p. 41419].

In addition, former Justice Minister Valyantsin Sukala was appointed chairman of the Supreme Court, and Uladzimir Boyka was confirmed as chairman of the Supreme Economic Court, a post he had held since 1991. Lukashenka completed his quota of appointments to the Constitutional Court

on Jan. 23, naming five further judges to the 12-member body. The remaining six posts were to be filled by appointees of the Council of the Republic.

Replacement of head of National Bank

The chairwoman of the National Bank of Belarus (NBB), Tamara Vinnikava, was dismissed from office on Jan 14 for "abuses of her official position". She was detained the same day pending an investigation of the charges. On Jan. 16, a presidential decree appointed Genadz Oleinikov, chairman of Belvneshekonombank (Belarus Foreign Economic Bank) to the post vacated by Vinnikava.

The charges were thought to relate to Vinnikava's previous post as chair of the board of Belarusbank (a commercial bank with 99 per cent state interest). She had been appointed to chair the NBB in 1996.

Formation of "shadow cabinet"

Opposition leaders from the outgoing legislature—the Supreme Council—and from democratic and communist parties met on Jan. 8 to form a coalition "shadow cabinet". Their declared aim was to develop alternative policies to those of the current regime. The chairman of the new body, which was to be named the Public Coalition Government-National Economic Council (PCG-NEC), was Genadz Karpenka of the United Civic Party (UCP). UCP leader Stanislaw Bahdankevich had been instrumental in providing the initiative for the PCG-NEC.

Suspension by Council of Europe

On Jan. 13 the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly decided to suspend Belarus's observer status [in force since September 1992]. It was also reported on Jan. 21 that the Council of Europe was to send a joint fact-finding mission to Belarus with the EU and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to report on the political situation there following the constitutional referendum of November 1996 [see p. 41381].

Relations with Russia and Ukraine

A letter from Russian President Boris Yeltsin to his Belarusian counterpart on Jan. 13, proposing further moves towards the integration of the two former Soviet republics, was welcomed by President Lukashenka.

The letter followed the treaty of April 1996—which had formed a Community of Sovereign Republics between Russia and Belarus [see p. 41062]—by suggesting the creation of a single government, and joint currencies, taxation systems and energy supply. Observers suggested that the Russian President's letter was a part of Russia's counter-offensive to NATO's plans for the inclusion of some East European states [see p. 41427].

Lukashenka held a meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart Leonid Kuchma on Jan. 17 in Gomel, Belarus, at which the two presidents discussed measures for further co-operation between their countries.

Confirmation of national holiday

A presidential decree of Jan. 4 confirmed that Belarusian Independence Day would be celebrated on July 3, the anniversary of its liberation from Nazi forces in 1944. The proposal had received massive popular support in the November constitutional referendum [see p. 41381].

■ Last article p. 41419; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

UKRAINE

Opening of Constitutional Court

Ukraine's Constitutional Court was formally instated on Jan. 3. Provision for the Court had been made in the new Constitution adopted on June 28, 1996 [see p. 41151]. Of its 18 judges, 16 had been appointed by the time the Court came into being. Two posts, however, to which the People's Council (legislature) was entitled to make appointments, remained vacant. President Leonid Kuchma announced on Jan. 3 that he had submitted his first case to the Court, asking it to review the constitutionality of the parliamentary auditing department.

Tension with Russia over Sevastopol

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry handed an official protest to the Russian embassy in Kiev on Jan. 19 over remarks made by the Mayor of Moscow and member of the Russian Federation Council, Yury Luzhkov, to the effect that the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol—the base of the Black Sea Fleet—"remained a Russian city". The Russian news agency ITAR-TASS quoted Luzhkov as saying that "nowhere and never was a document adopted to say that Sevastopol had been transferred under Ukrainian rule".

Luzhkov made his comments during a visit to Sevastopol on Jan. 17 to mark the presentation of 172 apartments to officers of the Black Sea Fleet. The apartments were the first to be completed in a new 300-apartment block funded from the Moscow city budget.

Luzhkov argued that Sevastopol had not been included in the transfer of the Crimean peninsula from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. In the month preceding his visit to the city, Luzhkov had drafted a resolution to the Russian Federation Council (the upper chamber of the bicameral Russian legislature) which disputed Ukraine's title to Sevastopol. The non-binding resolution was adopted on Dec. 5 by 110 votes to 14, with seven abstentions. Luzhkov's pursuit of the Sevastopol issue was thought to be a ploy to gain political popularity. [For Ukraine's relations with Russia see pp. 41062-63; 41329-30.]

■ Last article p. 41419; for key 1996 events see 1997 reference supplement.

ESTONIA

Refusal of Russia to sign border agreement.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov stated on Jan. 9 that Russia would not sign a border agreement with Estonia which had been drawn up in 1996. The agreement had been reached between Estonia's then Foreign Minister Siim Kallas and his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov during a meeting in the Russian city of Petrozavodsk on Nov. 5, 1996.

In announcing the revised Russian position, Primakov stressed that the rights of Russian speakers in Estonia needed to be protected. He stated that Russia should impose economic sanctions on those countries which discriminated against ethnic Russians, and he singled out Estonia as a prime offender.

Kallas suggested that Primakov's statement was the result of an internal political struggle within the Russian government and was linked to issues other than that of the border. A number of commentators accepted this analysis, emphasizing that Estonia had made concessions on the border issue in its attempt to foster good relations with Russia in order to strengthen its campaign for entry into the EU. Amongst these was its willingness to dispense with its demand that the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty be mentioned in the border pact, and its agreement to demarcate the border where Russia had unilaterally fixed it two years earlier [see pp. 41200-01; 40837; 40421].

Whilst expressing regret over the Russian decision, the Estonian government confirmed that it remained willing to sign the agreement. However, a round table of Estonian political parties declared on Jan. 24 that the signing of the treaty could not be linked to any concessions to

Russia regarding citizenship or other matters of internal Estonian policy.

Decision by Council of Europe to cease monitoring of Estonia

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly on Jan. 30 voted to close the monitoring procedure for Estonia. The Assembly highlighted Estonia's progress in the field of human rights since becoming a Council of Europe member in 1993 [see p. 39484] but noted a few areas which required further attention.

■ Last article p. 41420; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

LATVIA

Resignation and renomination of Prime Minister

Prime Minister Andris Skele, who resigned on Jan. 20, was re-nominated by President Guntis Ulmanis on Jan. 29 following consultations with the 100-member Saiema (legislature).

Skele had resigned after widespread criticism over his choice of businessman Vasilijs Melniks as Finance Minister to replace Aivars Kreituss who had been dismissed in October 1996 [see p. 41332]. Ulmanis had urged the Saiema to reject the appointment of Melniks, who had been the subject of a corruption investigation by the Prosecutor's Office but had been cleared of any wrong-doing. Following Skele's resignation over the issue, Melniks also resigned on Jan. 22.
The resignation of Skele was unexpected. Appointed to the post in December 1995 following an inconclusive earlier general election [see pp. 40874; 40788-89], he had been a compromise candidate without party affiliation. He subsequently formed an eight-party coalition, spanning the political spectrum, which he managed to hold together despite internal dissension. He was seen as a key figure in the acceleration of economic reforms and had aimed to make Latvia more attractive to investors. In December he had succeeded in gaining legislative approval for the country's first balanced budget.

Skele was renominated for the post of premier on Jan. 29 after negotiations demonstrated that he continued to command a majority in the Saiema. It was also reported that the President believed him to be the best choice for the continued implementation of economic reform. However, with formal consultations on the formation of a new government not due to commence until Feb. 4, the composition of Skele's new administration remained uncertain at the end of January.

However, on Jan. 30 two of the largest parliamentary factions, Latvia's Way and the Union for the Fatherland and Freedom, signed a co-operation agreement concerning the new government. They agreed to the retention of those Cabinet ministers who had proved their competence in the previous government, although a number of the proposals in the document were at odds with earlier statements made by the other major parliamentary faction, the Democratic Party Saimnieks. Skele had proposed forming the new government drawn from the three major parties, together with representatives from smaller groups, including the Farmers' Union coalition with Christian Democratic Union of Latvia.

■ Last article p. 41332; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

MOLDOVA

Inauguration of new President - Appointment of Prime Minister-designate

Petru Lucinschi was formally inaugurated as the new President of Moldova on Jan. 15. Lucinschi replaced Mircea Snegur whom he had defeated in elections held in November-December 1996 [see pp. 41382; 41419]. On Jan. 16 Lucinschi issued a decree designating Ion Cebuc, chairman of the State Accounting Chamber, as Prime Minister-designate.

Lucinschi had resigned as chair of the legislature (the Parlamentul) on Jan. 9. In a parliamentary ballot held on the same day Dumitru Motpan, head of the ruling Agrarian Democratic Party and a vice-chair of the Parlamentul, failed to win the 50 per cent of the vote required for his election as Lucinschi's successor. Motpan's failure appeared to reflect a regrouping of parliamentary forces which had occurred during the presidential election period.

Inauguration of Dnestr president - Talks on normalization memorandum

Igor Smirnov, who had been re-elected as President of the breakaway Dnestr region in December [see p. 41420], was inaugurated for a second term on Jan. 10.

Smirnov and Lucinschi held a round of "closed-door" talks on Jan. 3 to discuss a resumption of negotiations on a Dnestr settlement. Talks between the two sides had been frozen since mid-1996 when a memorandum on the normalization of relations between Moldova and Dnestr was initialled. After the memorandum had been initialled, former Moldovan President Snegur had refused to sign it unless it was revised. Following his election in December, Lucinschi had announced his intention to sign the memorandum as "an intermediate stage in granting of special status to the region".

■ Last article pp. 41419-20; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

AZERBAIJAN

Details of alleged 1996 coup plot - Sentencing of earlier coup plotters

The Interior Ministry and the Prosecutor General issued a joint statement on Jan. 24 which claimed that a coup attempt had been prevented in October 1996.

According to the statement, the coup had been planned under the leadership of, amongst others, former President Ayaz Mutalibov (1990-92) and former Prime Minister Surat Guseinov (1993-94). The statement also claimed that foreign intelligence officers were directly involved. In August 1995 the authorities claimed to have discovered a coup plot organized by Mutalibov, who was currently living in Moscow [see p. 40693].

In an unrelated case, on Jan. 16 the Supreme Court sentenced 31 former Baku special police force members to terms of imprisonment ranging between two and 14 years for their involvement in an attempted coup in March 1995 [see pp. 40463-64; 40960-61].

Approval of 1997 budget

The Milli Majlis (the legislature) approved the 1997 budget on Jan. 5 [for 1996 budget see p. 41017]. Expenditure was set at 3,184 billion manats (US$1.00=4,230 manats as at Jan. 3) and revenue at 2,500 billion manats.

■ Last articles pp. 41424; 41382; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

POLAND

Government change

Tadeusz Zielinki, a former Ombudsman, was appointed as Minister of Labour and Social Policy on Jan. 3. He replaced Andrzej Baczkowski who had died in November [see p. 41380].

Formation of new party

A new political party, the Conservative People's Party (SKL), was formed on Jan. 12.

The new party united two small opposition parties, the People's Christian Party (SZCh)—led by Artur Batazs—and the Conservative Party (PK)—led by Aleksander Hall. It also included a number of former members of the opposition Freedom Union (UW), including former ministers Jan Maria Rokita and Bronislaw Komorowski. Janek Janiszewsk, a former SZCh Agriculture Minister, was appointed as president of the SKL.

Komorowski was appointed as general secretary and Hall as head of the political council of the new party.

■ Last article p. 41418; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Signature of joint declaration by Czech Republic and Germany

On Jan. 21 the Czech Republic and Germany signed a declaration of reconciliation covering Nazi Germany's annexation of Czech territory in 1938-39, and the post-war expulsion by Czechoslovakia of 3,000,000 Sudetenland Germans [for details of declaration see pp. 41417-18].

Return to work by Havel

President Vaclav Havel, who had a malignant tumour removed from his lung in early December [see p. 41417], returned to work on Jan. 7 when he formally appointed Vlasta Parkanova as Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Minister. At the beginning of January, Havel, widowed in early 1996, married actress Dagmar Veskrnova and announced that he had given up smoking and drinking.

■ Last article pp. 41417-18; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

ROMANIA

Arrest of miners' leader

Miron Cosma, the leader of the miners' trade union in the Jiu Valley, was arrested on Jan. 10 and detained on a 30-day warrant on various serious charges, including "undermining state authority". Cosma had led miners from the Jiu Valley in a series of violent marches in Bucharest (the capital) in 1990-91. The last of these marches, in September 1991, had forced Petre Roman to resign as Prime Minister [see p. 38450].

Some reports claimed that Ion Iliescu, who had been defeated in November's presidential elections by Emil Constantinescu [see p. 41376], had recently summoned the miners to Bucharest.

■ Last article p. 41417; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

SWITZERLAND

Continuing pressure on banks over Nazi links

In a further effort to defuse the crisis arising from the role of Switzerland during the Second World War, the government and the country's banking community agreed on Jan. 23 to the establishment of a fund to aid Holocaust victims and their families. The government indicated, however, that it would not contribute financially to the fund until it was satisfied that the facts related to the fate of Jewish wartime assets had been fully established.

On Jan. 22 Rainer Gut, chairman of Credit Suisse Group, had urged the immediate setting up of a "well-endowed fund" as a goodwill gesture to survivors and victims of the Holocaust who had left their money in Swiss banks. Gut, who favoured a fund of more than Sfr100 million (US$1.00=Sfr1.40 as at Jan. 24), said that he had acted because Switzerland's credibility was at its lowest point since the Second World War. Under his plan the government, the Swiss National Bank and Swiss banks would each contribute a third to the fund. No date for the founding of the fund was given.

On Jan. 27 Carlo Jagmetti, the Swiss ambassador to the USA, resigned after it emerged that in a memo to Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti he had likened the handling of the crisis to waging a "war" which had to be fought on "two fronts: foreign and domestic". The remark caused great offence to Jewish organizations in Switzerland and abroad. Jagmetti apologized but accused the media and unnamed pressure groups of distorting the facts in order to portray both him and the government as anti-Semitic.

Jewish sensibilities had already been inflamed by comments made by Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, Minister of Public Economy and President in 1996. On Dec. 31 he had described the idea of the establishment of a compensation fund as "blackmail" and had argued that it "would be considered an admission of Swiss guilt". As a result, Jewish organizations—including the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Jewish Congress—had threatened to call for a boycott of Swiss banks. On Jan. 29 the New York City council began considering a bill to bar city funds from being deposited in Swiss banks until a memorial fund had been established.

On Jan. 30 more than 100 prominent Swiss writers, lawyers, doctors, academics and film producers published a petition accusing politicians and bankers of mishandling the scandal and damaging the national image.

On Jan. 31 Paul Volcker, the head of the independent committee searching for dormant accounts [see p. 41386], ordered an immediate investigation into the document-shredding policies of Swiss banks. The decision followed the revelation that Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), the country's most powerful bank, had destroyed historical records. In December a night watchman at UBS had discovered containers of shredded documents, some of which referred to the Second World War.

■ Last article p. 41424; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

CYPRUS

Tension over plan to install Russian missile system

It was revealed on Jan. 5 that the Cypriot government had placed an order for the purchase of Russian-made S-300 surface-to-air missiles. The news alarmed Western governments and severely heightened the tension between the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus.

The S-300, an accurate missile system with a range of about 140 km, was described by its makers—the Russian state-controlled Rosvoorouzhenie company—as superior to the US-built Patriot missile. Experts cited by the *Financial Times* of Jan. 6 stated that its acquisition by the [Greek] Cypriots would overturn the air superiority enjoyed by Turkish forces since their invasion of the island in 1974. It was estimated that Turkey had some 30,000 troops stationed in the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

Already alarmed by an arms build-up in both sectors of the divided island, many Western governments, together with UN representatives, expressed concern over the destabilizing effect of the missile purchase. Accordingly, the USA, UK and other governments reportedly urged President Glafkos Clerides of Cyprus to abandon the plan. The Cypriot government responded by claiming that it had a legitimate right to strengthen its defences "so that its people cease to be hostages of the Turkish occupation forces".

Rauf Denktash, the president of the TRNC, warned in late January that current trends on the island were leading towards war. On Jan. 6, President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey said that Ankara would not permit any threats against the Turkish Cypriot community. Turkish statements in the ensuing days further raised tension over the issue. On Jan. 9, Turhan Tayan, the Defence Minister, said in Ankara that Turkey would use its capability to prevent the missiles' deployment. In what was taken to be a reference to the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, he suggested that Turkey might "do the same again" if it proved necessary to neutralize the threat posed by the missiles.

Greek Cypriot officials appeared to play down the level of tension, stating that there was no fixed

date for the missiles' deployment and that the purchase was partly intended to focus international attention on the need for a solution to the wider Cyprus problem. However, on Jan. 10, government spokesman Yiannakis Cassoulides said that the defence programme would continue "undeterred by these [Turkish] threats". On the same day, Tansu Ciller, the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, stated at a news conference in Ankara that "if they are deployed, we will do whatever we have to and if that means they need to be hit, they will be hit". Ciller also accused Greece of encouraging the Greek Cypriot government to adopt a belligerent position. However, Kostas Simitis, the Greek Prime Minister, brushed aside hawkish statements by some government colleagues, stressing on Jan. 11 that his government remained committed to stability in the region.

Growing international involvement

Both the UK and US governments condemned the missile purchase as likely to trigger an arms race. Carey Cavanaugh, a US State Department special envoy, arrived in Nicosia (Lefkosia) on Jan. 12 and immediately called for restraint by all parties.

On Jan. 13 Cavanaugh announced that he had been assured by President Clerides that the missiles would not be deployed for another 16 months and that their purchase, therefore, need not be a crisis issue. Denktash was reported to have welcomed this assurance, and the US envoy travelled to Athens that same day. In the Greek capital he announced that there had been a "breakthrough" and that the two sides in Cyprus had agreed upon a package of measures to reduce tension.

Despite these US efforts to defuse the situation, however, tension between the two sides remained acute at the end of January. Demirel and Denktash issued a statement in Ankara on Jan. 20 which asserted that Turkey would build air and naval bases in northern Cyprus unless Greece abandoned plans to establish military facilities in the south of the island. Furthermore, the statement made clear that any attack on the TRNC would be considered as an attack on Turkey itself. On the following day it was announced in Ankara that Turkish naval vessels would visit northern Cyprus in the coming days, and on Jan. 25-26 crowds turned out to welcome Turkish warships as they arrived in the port of Famagusta.

On Jan. 21, Greek-Cypriot officials rejected Cavanaugh's proposal to ban flights over Cyprus by both Greek and Turkish warplanes.

■ Last article p. 41424; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

TURKEY

Allegations of state involvement with criminal gangs

An official inquiry into alleged links between Mafia-type underground gangs and government officials announced on Jan. 10 that it was to recommend prosecuting Mehmet Agar, the disgraced former Interior Minister, Sedat Bucak, a member of the legislature, and 34 others including a number of senior police officers [see p. 41389].

Bucak was a member of the True Path Party (DYP) headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Tansu Ciller, a part of the governing coalition. He was the sole survivor of a mysterious car crash in November 1996 [see p. 41389] in which he had been travelling in the same car as a former police chief, a notorious gangster and a former beauty queen. The gangster, Abdullah Catli, was allegedly being protected from the authorities by Agar.

While Bucak denied any wrongdoing, it was reported that the chief prosecutor in Istanbul was seeking to have his parliamentary immunity lifted so that he could face charges.

■ Last article p. 41389; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

GREECE

Protests over government austerity plans

Public and private sector workers, together with merchant seamen, mounted a series of disruptive strikes during January over government economic measures which aimed to qualify Greece for European economic and monetary union within five years [see p. 41389].

A one-day strike on Jan. 23 called by the General Confederation of Greek Workers, closed banks and offices, and halted rail, air and bus traffic. Thousands of strikers demonstrated in central Athens where Christos Polyzogopoulos, leader of the Confederation, warned of further "great unrest" unless the government modified its determination to cut public spending.

In a separate action, secondary school teachers on Jan. 20 launched an indefinite strike for higher pay. However, on Jan. 23 seamen ended a 10-day strike which had caused severe food shortages on some islands and had trapped several thousand foreign truck drivers. The strike ended after the government dropped plans to end tax-free privileges long enjoyed by seamen.

Renewal of farmers' protests

Farmers, who blockaded roads for 25 days during December [see p. 41422], resumed their protests on Jan. 28, despite government threats to use force in order to prevent further disruption of the economy.

The farmers, who were reportedly planning to occupy public buildings across central Greece and to block the main north-south railway, were demanding lower fuel costs, cuts in value-added tax on farm equipment, higher price supports, especially for cotton, and a rescheduling of debts to the state Agricultural Bank.

■ Last article p. 41422; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

SPAIN

Gibraltar co-sovereignty offer to UK

The Spanish government on Jan. 29 confirmed that it had made a fresh proposal to the UK for shared sovereignty over Gibraltar which had been rejected by the UK government.

The proposal, news of which had been leaked to the Spanish press on Jan. 28, had been made by Foreign Minister Abel Matutes to his British counterpart Malcolm Rifkind on Jan. 22 during their meeting in the Spanish capital, Madrid. Official Spanish sources stated that the UK government had rejected the offer on Jan. 28 on the grounds that it did not take into account the feelings of Gibraltarians, a majority of whom had decisively rejected previous co-sovereignty schemes. The proposal had reportedly envisaged a co-sovereignty arrangement of between 50 to 75 years, with the possibility that this might be extended to 100 years. Under it, UK would have retained substantial control over Gibraltar's affairs, including foreign relations, but Spain would have played a role "gradually commensurate with the new arrangement".

Peter Caruana, Gibraltar's Chief Minister, on Jan. 28 described Matutes's proposal as "absurd". He made his statement during a high-profile visit to Brussels to seek EU assistance in resolving some of the territory's grievances against Spain. These included a ban on maritime and air links between Spain and Gibraltar, restrictions imposed on airlines approaching Gibraltar airport, and the refusal of Spain to recognize Gibraltarian identity cards or the territory's international telephone code. The Spanish press denounced Caruana's visit as unnecessary on the grounds that the UK had sole responsibility for Gibraltar's external affairs, including its relationship with the EU. Spanish pressure reportedly dissuaded the relevant EU commissioners from receiving Caruana's delegation.

The meeting between Matutes and Rifkind also sought to defuse the contentious issue of Spain's attitude to British passports issued in Gibraltar. The two ministers agreed to establish a commission to examine the status of such passports, particularly those (1,400 out

of a total of 14,000) which did not include the right of residence in the UK and EU.

In early January the Spanish Foreign Ministry had threatened to withdraw recognition of the passports by treating as obsolete a 1960 Anglo-Spanish visa-waver treaty under which Gibraltarians had acquired the right to travel freely to Spain. However, this threat was withdrawn after the UK insisted that Spain recognize the passports as issued to a dependent territory within the EU, and argued that failure to do so would be in breach of EU rules on free movement.

Rifkind also announced that Caruana would shortly introduce tougher measures to combat illegal activities in Gibraltar, including the laundering of drug money which was a major Spanish concern.

ETA violence

Justice Minister Margarita Maríscal de Gante stated on Jan. 23 that the government and the Attorney General's office were considering a possible legal reform to permit the prosecution of those judged to have defended the use of terrorism. She added that the government was also prepared to introduce special measures to combat a recent upsurge in street violence in the Basque country.

The issue of the defence of terrorism was raised following the fatal shooting on Jan. 9 of Lt.-Col. Jesús Agustín Cuesta Abril in Madrid by suspected ETA members. The attack was linked by many to comments made hours earlier by Jaime Iribarren, a parliamentary deputy of Herri Batasuna (HB), the political wing of the ETA Basque separatists. Iribarren had expressed regret that more violence was imminent as an inevitable consequence of continued "repressive measures," and had urged the government to negotiate with ETA prisoners over their demands to be transferred to prisons nearer their homes. Following the shooting, sections of the media called for Iribarren's prosecution.

There was considerable street violence by supporters of ETA during January, mostly involving youths in Bilbao, San Sebastian and Pamplona, which led to dozens of arrests. ETA was also believed to have been responsible for a rocket grenade attack at Madrid airport on Jan. 2 which caused little damage.

The organization suffered a major blow, however, with the arrest in France on Jan. 17 of the group's alleged third most senior figure, José Luis Urrosolo Sistiago. This came three days after another prominent member, Josu de Mondragon, had been handed over to Spanish police by the French authorities.

Reduction in interest rates

The Bank of Spain on Jan. 16 cut its benchmark interest rate a quarter point to 6 per cent, a record low, in response to the announcement of a 3.2 per cent year-on-year headline inflation figure in December, the lowest since 1968.

■ Last article p. 41421; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

FRANCE

Efforts to trace Jewish assets

Prime Minister Alain Juppé announced on Jan. 25 that a five-member commission was being established to trace and list property seized by the Vichy government from French Jews in 1940-44. Juppé's decision followed the revelation that French museums were still holding almost 2,000 works of art seized from Jews during the Second World War.

The Jewish population of France had been around 300,000 when the German occupation began in 1940; at least 74,000 Jews were deported to Nazi concentration camps. At the end of the war much of the appropriated Jewish property was either untraceable or was unclaimed and remained in government hands. Juppé said that the commission would "evaluate the scope of the plunder, what happened to the stolen goods, the current location of those goods and their legal situation".

On Jan. 21 the Cour des Comptes, the national auditor, claimed that Musées de France (the state-run museum authority) had failed in its legal duty to seek the rightful owners of works of art stolen from Jewish owners. It said that 1,878 such pieces, including works by Gauguin, Monet, Renoir and Rodin, were held by the Louvre, while the Musée d'Orsay possessed 85 pillaged works. The works had fallen under the control of Musées de France at the end of the war and legislation passed in 1949 required it to publicize its guardianship of the pieces, and arrange for them to be reclaimed by their rightful owners. The auditors said that no major public effort had been made to achieve this since 1954, a charge denied by the Musées de France.

Establishment of commission on judicial reform

President Jacques Chirac on Jan. 21 outlined plans for the reform of the judicial system, calling for greater judicial independence, better protection of the presumption of innocence and simplified legal procedures. Chirac declared that the reconstruction of the legal system would be one of the key reforms of his presidency. Accordingly, he announced the establishment of a 21-member commission headed by Pierre Truché, president of the Cour de Cassation, which was charged with reporting to the government by July 15 on ways of achieving such reforms.

Increased security measures - Islamist convictions and arrests

The Interior Ministry confirmed on Jan. 10 that an extra 1,000 troops were deployed in Paris, reinforcing the 2,000 soldiers and riot police already patrolling the city. The Ministry said that the increased security precautions were being taken following the sentencing of Islamists on the previous day. The start of the Muslim month of Ramadan had also been a factor in the decision. Police made a series of arrests of suspected Islamists during January, including 22 people arrested in Paris, Marseilles, and Nice on Jan. 20.

The Islamists were convicted in the Paris Criminal Court on Jan. 9 on charges relating an attack on a Marrakesh hotel in August 1994 [see pp. 40160; 40205; 41420-21] and received sentences of one to eight years' imprisonment.

Corsican arrests

The government stepped up its campaign against the banned Front for the National Liberation of Corsica (FLNC) during January, arresting about 30 people thought to be associated with the organization.

Among those arrested was Jean-Michel Rossi, a leading figure in A Cuncolta, the legal political wing of FLNC. His capture on Jan. 4, along with that of François Santoni in December [see pp. 41420-21], was thought to have left the movement bereft of effective leaders. The only A Cuncolta leader still at large was Charles Pieri, whose operational capacity was believed to have been damaged after he was badly injured in a car bombing in 1996.

Transport strike

Public transport workers held a one-day strike on Jan. 24 affecting most of the country's big cities and towns, including Grenoble, Lille, Lyon and Marseilles. The strike was in support of demands for the retirement age for all transport workers to be reduced from 60 to 55. Early retirement was already enjoyed by train drivers, as well as Paris public transport workers and, under the settlement reached to end the November strike by lorry drivers, by drivers with 20 years' service [see pp. 41386-87].

However, most politicians ruled out earlier retirement for all workers. Prime Minister Juppé said that it was "not possible financially" and that there was "no question of the government bending". He added that only those who worked more that 39 hours a week could have any claim to

retire at the age of 55. The call was also resisted by the opposition Socialist Party. Nevertheless, many commentators believed that earlier retirement was likely to be a popular issue in the run-up to the 1998 general election.

On Jan. 29 rail unions launched a 36-hour stoppage against a government plan to reform the heavily loss-making state-owned rail network, Société nationale des chemins de fer français (SNCF). A bill detailing the government's plans had been presented to the Senate (the upper house of the legislature) on Jan. 21. This provided for the company to be divided into two, with Réseau ferré national (RFN) taking responsibility for the track and infrastructure and a revamped SNCF being responsible for running and managing the trains. Both entities would be state-owned. The trade unions feared that the restructuring would mean the loss of jobs.

Bank protest

Workers at the Paris headquarters of Crédit Foncier, the specialist property lender, held five of the senior executives hostage on Jan. 17-22 in protest at government plans for the bank's reconstruction.

About 500 workers began a sit-in on the morning of Jan. 17 and prevented Jérome Meysonnier, the bank's state-appointed governor and four other officials from leaving the building. The protest was provoked by a statement some days before to the National Assembly finance commission by Minister of Finance and Economics Jean Arthuis who said that legislation to transfer ownership of Crédit Foncier to the control of a specially created state institution would be presented within a few weeks. In 1996 the government had taken the unprecedented step of launching a F2.7 billion (US$1.00=F5.20 as at Dec. 31, 1996) rescue of Crédit Foncier after heavy provisions had made it technically bankrupt with losses of F10.8 billion. Under the latest government plan, 1,500 of Crédit Foncier's 3,300 staff, and some of the bank's activities were to be transferred to Crédit Immobilier, another property lender, while the remainder would be placed under a newly created state-owned company, the future of which remained uncertain.

Meysonnier was apparently not held by force but, reluctant to antagonize his staff, he did not attempt to leave the building. He had access to his office and maintained contact with the government and media. He and his colleagues were finally released on Jan. 21. The bank's staff, however, pledged to continue their occupation until the government agreed to shelve the reconstruction plans. They continued to provide a skeleton service for customers.

■ Last article pp. 41420-21; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

GERMANY

Presentation of controversial tax reforms

Planned tax reforms, unveiled on Jan. 23, exposed tensions within the centre-right governing coalition—consisting of the Christian Democrats (CDU), the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Free Democrats (FDP)—and provoked a wave of criticism from opposition parties. The proposed reform of the country's complex tax system emerged from months of discussions by a commission of experts and politicians chaired by the CSU Finance Minister Theo Waigel.

Announcing what he described as "the most sweeping tax reform for 50 years", Waigel stated that the government wanted to cut the top and bottom rates of income tax from 53 per cent and 25.9 per cent to 39 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively, from January 1999 [see also p. 41385]. Corporation tax would be cut to 35 per cent in 1998 and the solidarity surcharge (the tax added to income and corporation tax to help finance the re-integration of eastern Germany) was to be reduced by 2 percentage points to 5.5 per cent.

There were divisions among the coalition partners as to how to make up the consequent loss of revenue of more than DM80 billion (US$1.00=DM1.63 as at Jan. 24) per year. Waigel said that some of the loss would be offset by the abolition of a wide range of tax concessions, the imposition of tax on certain forms of overtime earnings for the first time, and the taxation of some pensions and life insurance policies. This was expected to reduce the shortfall to DM25 billion, which could be raised by increasing value added tax by 1-2 percentage points. However, this was opposed not just by opposition parties but also by elements within the CDU, CSU and FDP, some of whom called for Waigel's dismissal. The stiffest challenge to Waigel came from Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Norbert Blüm, of the CDU, who had voted against the reforms when they had been discussed at a Cabinet meeting on Jan. 23. Blüm, chair of the pension reform commission, maintained that the proposed taxation of pensions "made more difficult a needed expansion of company and private pensions schemes". Observers believed that the level of opposition meant that in order to secure support for the reforms, the government would have to make concessions when drafting the necessary legislation.

Controversy over position of the Church of Scientology

Relations between Germany and the USA were strained during January as Germany's attitude to the Church of Scientology was criticized. In its annual survey of global human rights published on Jan. 29, the US State Department also accused the German government of operating a "campaign of harassment and intimidation" against the Church of Scientology.

The issue had already attracted public attention after 34 high-profile US actors, film directors, producers and authors had accused the German government of discriminating against the group, likening the plight of Scientologists to that of the Jews under Nazi Germany. The accusation was published an "open letter" to Chancellor Helmut Kohl as a full page advertisement in the *International Herald Tribune* on Jan. 9. The signatories, including Dustin Hoffman, Oliver Stone and Gore Vidal, claimed that Scientologists were banned from German political parties and excluded from jobs in the public service, and that their children were expelled from schools. They also claimed that Kohl's CDU had organized boycotts of performances by US artists who were Scientologists. Observers noted that there was truth in the accusations. German political parties had supported moves to curb the activities of the group on the grounds that it was not founded on religious principles, and, in some conservative Länder, Scientologists were barred from public employment. The government was also said to be considering putting the group under surveillance by the anti-extremist Office for the Protection of the Constitution.

Responding to the State Department report Berhard Protner, general secretary of the CSU, declared that "influential circles in the State Department have obviously fallen for Scientology's hate campaign against Germany and have let themselves be used by the sect".

New trial of Wolf

Marcus Wolf, the former head of the East German secret police (Stasi), appeared in court on Jan. 7 on charges of abduction, coercion and causing grievous bodily harm. The charges related to a number of alleged incidents which had occurred many years before, the earliest dating from 1955. Wolf had been convicted of treason in 1993 [see p. 39787]. However, the verdict had been quashed in 1995 by the Federal Court on the grounds that East Germans could not be tried for having spied on West Germany from East German soil [see p. 40793].

■ Last article p. 41422; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

AUSTRIA

Resignation of Vranitzky - Appointment of new government

Franz Vranitzky resigned as Chancellor on Jan. 19, saying that after more than 10 years in office he wanted to make way for a younger generation [for his appointment in

1986 see p. 34693]. He designated Finance Minister Viktor Klima as his successor. Although there had been considerable speculation about Vranitzky's future following the poor showing of his Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) in the October 1996 elections to the European Parliament [see p. 41334], the timing of his departure surprised many commentators

His resignation came a week after the SPÖ had pushed through the controversial privatization of Creditanstalt, Austria's second biggest bank, in the face of opposition from the conservative People's Party (ÖVP), the junior partner in the governing coalition. The government had agreed on Jan. 12 to sell its 70 per cent stake in Creditanstalt to Bank Austria—the country's largest bank, with ties to the SPÖ—for Sch17.16 billion (US$1.00=Sch11.14 as at Jan. 10). The ÖVP had favoured a sale to the public and, in an attempt to assuage its opposition to the deal, the government ensured that the terms of the sale required Bank Austria to sell some of the shares in a secondary offering.

While the negotiations for the sale had threatened to bring about the collapse of the coalition, they had enhanced the reputation of Klima as a politician who was prepared to take difficult decisions. On Jan. 24 he named his new Cabinet, This included the appointment of Rudolf Edlinger as Minister of Finance. Edlinger was on the board of the AVZ Foundation (which held a 45 per cent stake in Bank Austria) and had been a key figure in the take-over of Creditanstalt.

The distribution of portfolios at Jan. 24 was as follows:

+Viktor Klima (SPÖ) Federal Chancellor

Wolfgang Schüssel (ÖVP) Vice-Chancellor

Wolfgang Bartenstein (ÖVP) Environment, Youth and Family

***Rudolf Edlinger** (SPÖ) Finance

Johann Farnleitner (ÖVP) Economic Affairs

+Karl Schlogl (SPÖ) Interior

Werner Fasslabend (ÖVP) Defence

Elisabeth Gehrer (*f*) (ÖVP) Education and Cultural Affairs

***Lore Hostasch** (*f*) (SPÖ) Labour, Health and Social Affairs

***Barbara Prammer** (*f*) (SPÖ) Women's Issues and Consumer Protection

Nikolaus Michalek (ind.) Justice

Wilhelm Molterer (ÖVP) Agriculture and Forestry

+Caspar Einem (SPÖ) Science and Transport

***Peter Wittmann** (SPÖ) Minister of State at the Federal Chancellery

Benita Ferrero-Waldner (*f*) (ÖVP) Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

***Wolfgang Ruttenstorfer** (SPÖ) Minister of State at the Ministry of Finance

*New appointment.

+Altered responsibilities.

Women are denoted by (*f*).

■ **Last article p. 41334; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

ITALY

New constitutional reform commission

The Senate on Jan. 16 voted by 256 to 16 to establish a 70-member bicameral commission to modernize the 1948 Constitution; the decision was later endorsed by the Chamber of Deputies. The decision contrasted with the draft legislation introduced in July 1996 which had favoured the establishment of two commissions, one drawn from each of the legislative chambers [see p. 41205].

The foundation for this new bipartisan consensus on constitutional reform had been laid in December during lengthy negotiations between Massimo D'Alema, the leader of the former communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and a major force in the centre-left Olive Tree coalition government, and former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of Forza Italia and the main opposition centre-right Freedom Alliance (Polo della Libertá). It was also reportedly the product of long and bitter internal debates amongst right-wing opposition leaders.

Continuing divisions within the opposition, however, posed the greatest threat to the success of the commission which had until the end of June 1997 to complete its recommendations. In contrast to the view held by Berlusconi, his main ally, Gianfranco Fini, the leader of the far-right and former fascist National Alliance (AN) party, favoured the adoption of a powerful French-style presidential system [see p. 40965]. There was, however, considerable public distrust in such an option because of the legacy of misused centralized power associated with the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini. There was stronger support for the strengthening of the powers of the prime minister, a revision of the electoral system, a reduction in the number of legislators, a redefinition of the roles of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies (in an effort to avoid duplication), and, particularly, a move towards a federal structure which would embody greater regional autonomy.

The decision by the Constitutional Court on Jan. 30 to reject 19 out of 30 proposals for referendums aided the task of the commission. The main political parties welcomed the court's decision to reject a referendum proposing the abolition of the remaining 25 per cent of proportional representation in the electoral system.

Resignation of judge in Berlusconi trial - Acquittal of Berlusconi's brother

Berlusconi's year-long corruption trial was declared null and void on Jan. 30 following the resignation on Jan. 20 of the presiding judge in the face of accusations of bias against the defendant [for trial background see pp. 40922; 40966; 41204; 41338].

In October 1996 Judge Carlo Crivelli had been picked up by a court microphone advising a prosecutor to use a "carrot and stick" method in his interrogation of witnesses. Berlusconi and his co-defendants claimed that the remark proved that Crivelli wished to secure their conviction. A January appeal court ruled that although the comments represented a "serious lapse", they were delivered outside of formal court proceedings and were, therefore, legally irrelevant. Nevertheless, Crivelli stepped down, stating that his "public prestige and impartiality" had been undermined by the incident.

In a separate case, a court in the northern city of Brescia on Jan. 29 cleared Berlusconi's younger brother, Paolo Berlusconi, of charges of blackmailing Antonio Di Pietro, the former spearhead of the country's "clean hands" anti-corruption investigations (1992-94) which had helped to topple a large number of business people and politicians. Cesare Previti, the Defence Minister in the Berlusconi government of 1994, and two senior Justice Ministry officials were also acquitted on the same charge.

The court ruled that there was no evidence to support the accusation that the defendants were part of a conspiracy which had forced Di Pietro to resign as a magistrate in 1994 [see p. 40329]. The reasons for the resignation were never fully explained and had led to speculation that Berlusconi's government had sanctioned the compiling of compromising dossiers on Di Pietro, who had subsequently resigned as the Public Works Minister in November 1996 and had been the subject of intensive corruption investigations by the Guardi di Finanza (Finance Police) [see pp. 41388-89; 41421].

Draft bill on judicial reforms

On Jan. 11 the government approved a draft bill which was intended to tackle a backlog of hundreds of corruption cases involving business people, public officials and politicians, created by the "clean hands" campaign. According to the *Financial Times* on Jan. 12, the government and opposition par-

ties were anxious to end "the destabilizing consequences of permanent anti-corruption investigations and trials and appeals that could last well into the next century".

Subject to parliamentary approval, the new legislation allowed for an expanded fast-track plea-bargaining system. This was designed to cover, mostly, common corruption cases—namely those concerned with the abuse of public office, the illegal financing of political parties and the falsification of accounts. Commentators suggested that the adoption of such a system would avoid time-consuming procedures but would result in few of the accused facing imprisonment or lengthy disqualification from public office.

Upholding of sentences against left-wing militants

The Supreme Court on Jan. 22 confirmed life sentences on three former left-wing activists. The ruling was widely condemned with only the AN among the main political parties supporting the ruling.

Adriano Sofri, 55, the former leader of the left-wing Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle) militant group, and two fellow activists, Giorgio Pietrostefani and Ovidio Bompressi, were sentenced to 22 years imprisonment for ordering and carrying out the murder in May 1972 of Milan police commissioner Luigi Calabresi [see p. 26411]. It was the seventh separate trial relating to the charge, and on four previous occasions the courts had either annulled pervious sentences or cleared the three defendants.

Politicians and commentators questioned the validity of imposing a sentence so long after the event, particularly as it was based solely on the slender and highly contradictory evidence of Leonardo Marino. A former Lotta Continua member, Marino had originally been charged with the same crime but had become a police informer in mysterious circumstances in 1988. The left viewed the verdict as a continuation of an ideologically inspired feud by remnants of the "old order" and the right, most prominently Berlusconi, as proof of the incompetence of the judiciary.

Protests by dairy farmers

The government on Jan. 30 introduced measures to support the milk sector in an effort to end two weeks of militant protests by dairy farmers. Subject to EU approval, the government proposed to: (i) set up a commission to investigate the application of milk quotas in Italy; (ii) grant farmers soft loans to meet EU fines for over-production and to oblige them to pay only 25 per cent of the fines immediately; and (iii) offer farmers financial incentives to cull cattle.

The protests had occurred after farmers had refused to meet an end-of-January EU deadline for the payment of fines of some L370 billion (US1.00=L1586.05 as at Jan. 24) which had been imposed for exceeding milk quotas in 1995-96. The farmers had ignored EU milk quotas since 1982 and had relied on the government to pay the fines, a practice subsequently banned by the EU.

Interest rate cut

The Bank of Italy relaxed its tight monetary policy on Jan. 21 by cutting its benchmark discount rate from 7.50 to 6.75 per cent following the release of better than expected (preliminary) inflation figures for January which showed consumer prices rising at an annualized rate of 2.6 per cent.

The decision was expected to soften the impact of the forthcoming 1997 mini-budget, scheduled for early 1997, which was designed to tackle a larger than forecast fiscal deficit for 1996 of L138,500 billion, equivalent to 7.5 per cent of GDP. The original 1997 budget, endorsed in December 1996, had sought to reduce the fiscal deficit to 3 per cent of GDP in line with the convergence criteria for 1999 entry into a single currency in accordance with the third and final stage of economic and monetary union (EMU).

■ **Last article p. 41421; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

BELGIUM

Anti-government protests

The government's strategy of cutting expenditure to qualify for the European single currency provoked several demonstrations during the month. The largest of these took place on Jan. 28 when public-sector workers marched through Brussels to demonstrate their opposition to any attempt to cut jobs or privatize services. They were supported by campaigners against child abuse, who had been at the centre of recent anti-government protests [see p. 41335]. Together with accusations of bribery and corruption, the protests put further pressure on the country's beleaguered coalition government.

The legitimacy of the government's efforts to reduce its huge national debt to meet the convergence criteria for monetary union also came under scrutiny during January. On Jan. 9 Philippe Maystadt, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Trade, denied charges that the government was "cooking the books". He said that efforts to persuade banks, local authorities and health insurance schemes to move their money into state bonds had been fully laid out in the budget. According to newspaper reports, however, in some cases funds were being transferred for short periods—particularly at the end of the year when the national debt levels were calculated—thereby giving the appearance that the overall size of the debt was being reduced.

In a further blow for the government, the Brussels demonstration coincided with a police raid on the headquarters of the Walloon Socialist Party (PS), one of the four partners in the governing coalition. The raid, in which several boxes of documents were seized, followed the earlier arrest of two former senior PS officials as part of the long-running investigation into claims that, in 1989, the party had received bribes from the French aviation group Dassault in a successful attempt to win military contracts [see also p. 41109]. The officials, Merry Hermanus and François Pirot, were charged on Jan. 27 in connection with allegations that they had received BFr30,000,000 (US1.00=BFr33.56 as at Jan. 24) from Dassault as a contribution to PS funds. Hermanus subsequently claimed that Guy Spitaels, a former national minister and PS president, and the current president of the Walloon Regional Assembly, had known of the contribution. However, Spitaels denied all knowledge of the affair. [See also p. 39833.]

The Dassault scandal had already brought down several senior Socialists, including Willy Claes, former Minister of Economic Affairs, who had been forced to resign as NATO Secretary-General in October 1995 [see p. 40793]. The latest revelations, which had followed a French court's decision to turn over material related to the case to the Belgian police on Jan. 7, also prompted renewed calls by the opposition for the PS—the second largest partner in the coalition—to withdraw from the government.

Reopening of di Rupo investigation

On Jan. 14 Eliane Liekendael procurator general at the Court of Cassation (the supreme court) announced that the investigation into charges that Deputy Prime Minister Elio di Rupo had had sexual relations with minors had been reopened. Di Rupo had been cleared of the allegations in December [see pp. 41421-22].

Liekendael said that the investigation centred on complaints made after the passing of special legislation on Dec. 18, 1996, which had empowered the Court of Cassation to open a judicial inquiry against federal ministers without prior parliamentary consent. Liekendael indicated that two complaints against another unnamed federal minister were also being investigated.

Further charges against Dutroux

Marc Dutroux, whose arrest in August had led to the exposure of a paedophile ring, was on Jan. 31 charged with the murders of Ann Marchal and Eefje Lambrecks. He already faced charges of their kidnapping as well as

the abduction of six girls between June 1995 and August 1996 [see pp. 41241; 41291; 41335; 41385].

■ Last article pp. 41421-22; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

UNITED KINGDOM

Growing fragility of government

Having lost its parliamentary majority in December [see pp. 41422-23], the fragility of Prime Minister John Major's Conservative Party government became increasingly evident during the first weeks of the 1997 parliamentary session.

On Jan. 20, the government managed to secure an amendment to the Crime and Punishment (Scotland) Bill by only a single vote. Then, on Jan. 21, it was forced to bring two Conservative MPs to the House of Commons (the lower chamber of the legislature) by ambulance in order to vote in a debate on the health service. In the House of Lords, the government suffered two defeats over the surveillance provisions in the Police Bill on Jan. 20 and a further defeat on the following day over compensation provisions in the Firearms (Amendment) Bill. On Jan. 27 the Conservatives failed to win a vote to revoke Labour amendments to the Education Bill made in the committee stage.

The government's position was made more difficult following the death of Conservative MP Iain Mills on Jan. 16 which reduced the government's Commons strength to 322 votes against 323 for the combined opposition parties. The death of Labour MP Martin Redmond on Jan. 20, however, restored the equilibrium.

Chancellor's stance on a single currency

Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke challenged "Eurosceptics" in the Conservative Party in late January by insisting that the UK could still be among the first wave of countries to join a single European currency. In an interview published in the *Financial Times* on Jan. 29 Clarke said that the Cabinet's view was that monetary union was "very unlikely" to take place on Jan. 1, 1999. However, taking a position in opposition to several of his Cabinet colleagues, he said that if the single currency were to go ahead, the UK could well join as little as six months later. He predicted that the "chances are that it will start in the next parliament" and that the "Cabinet had not ruled out joining in the first wave".

Toyota, the Japanese car manufacturer, entered the single currency debate on Jan. 29 when its president, Hiroshi Okuda, reportedly warned that the company would shift its European investment from the UK to continental Europe in the event of the UK remaining outside the single currency.

Controversy over new royal yacht

The surprise announcement of government plans to build a new royal yacht to replace *Britannia* caused a storm of protest in January. The announcement was made on Jan. 22 by Defence Secretary Michael Portillo, who said that costs of the new vessel (£60,000,000 for its construction, with annual running costs estimated at £4,000,000) would be met by public funds. He acknowledged that the ship would have no military purpose but insisted that a royal yacht fulfilled an important role in overseas trade and projected a prestigious image of the UK which added "powerfully to official occasions and to British economic interests". It was expected to come into operation in 2002.

The Labour Party criticized the government for failing to consult them on the decision, and accused the Conservative Party of "playing politics with the Queen" by making the announcement in order to boost their electoral chances. On Jan. 25 Labour confirmed that there would be no public funding for a royal yacht in the first two years of a Labour government. Portillo accused the Labour Party of being anti-monarchist, but by this time it had become clear that there was a high level of public hostility to the use of taxpayers' money for the project.

Creation of food safety council

On Jan. 30 the government announced plans to establish an independent food safety council. The council would be chaired by a food safety adviser who would have a statutory duty to safeguard public health. The adviser, enjoying the same status as the government's chief medical officer, would be answerable to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). The government had hitherto resisted pressure to establish an independent body, rejecting the claims from opposition parties and consumer organizations that the MAFF was hampered by a conflict of interest between food producers and consumers.

The announcement came in the wake of public concern over a series of food safety issues, including salmonella in eggs, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or "mad cow disease" [see p. 41468], powdered baby milk and, most recently, an outbreak of E Coli food poisoning which had claimed 18 lives in Scotland since November 1996.

Bombing of Arab newspaper office

A letter bomb exploded at the London offices of *al-Hayat*, a leading Arabic daily, on Jan. 13. Two employees were injured and three further devices were detonated in controlled explosions by the police. No organization claimed responsibility for the bombs. The Saudi-owned *al-Hayat* had voiced support for the Middle East peace process, and at the end of December had published an editorial strongly critical of Islamist extremism. Police believed the attack could have been linked to similar devices which had been posted to the Washington office of the paper [see p. 41438.]

Release of Nadir aide

Elizabeth Forsyth was released from prison on Jan. 30 after the Appeal Court ruled that the five-year sentence imposed on her had been "disproportionately" long. Forsyth was a former aide to Asil Nadir, chairman of Polly Peck International which had collapsed leaving massive debts in 1990. She had been convicted in April 1996 of laundering money stolen from the company [see p. 41057].

■ Last article pp. 41422-23; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Deterioration in security situation

The security situation in Northern Ireland continued to deteriorate during January as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) launched a series of attacks on Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) officers on Jan. 6-7 and doubts remained over the maintenance of the loyalist ceasefire [see p. 41423].

The worsening situation was reflected in the fierce denunciation of the IRA by UK Northern Ireland Minister Sir Patrick Mayhew. On Jan. 27 he declared that the government would "pursue you with every means. . . . We shall never give up. . . . You will never be safe. In the end you will spend long years of your lives in prison" . Observers believed that the vehemence of the statement was a further sign that Northern Ireland was again on the brink of serious sectarian violence.

On Jan. 27 Michael Ancram, the UK minister in charge of political development in Northern Ireland, told the first 1997 session of the all-party talks at Stormont [see p. 41292] that despite the recent attacks on republicans, the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party had not breached the Mitchell Principles on non-violence [see p. 40919]. Both parties were linked to Loyalist paramilitary groups. Ancram, however, did concede that the Loyalist ceasefire was under considerable strain.

Abandonment of Whitemoor escape trial

The trial of six prisoners—five alleged IRA men convicted on terrorist offences and one

man convicted of armed robbery—charged with escaping from the maximum security Whitemoor prison collapsed on Jan. 23 after the judge accepted that pre-trial publicity meant that the men could not expect a fair hearing.

The men, appearing in London's Woolwich Crown Court, had pleaded not guilty to escaping from the English prison in September 1994. The judge dismissed the case after he found that an article in the London *Evening Standard* in which the men were described as "IRA terrorists" constituted prejudicial publicity. This was the second time that the trial had had to be abandoned because of prejudicial publicity. The judge also said that the deteriorating mental condition of the five men had contributed to his decision. He said that he did not believe that the "interests of justice [could] be served by a third attempt at this trial".

■ **Last article p. 41423; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

IRELAND

1997-98 budget

Finance Minister Ruairi Quinn presented the 1997-98 budget on Jan. 22 which contained a mixture of tax cuts and modest public expenditure increases. While providing for a planned surplus, the budget also aimed to keep Ireland on track to qualify for membership of the European single currency.

Current expenditure was forecast to increase by 6 per cent over 1996-97 to IR£13.4 billion (US$1.00=IR£0.62 as at Jan. 24), with revenue forecast to rise by 5 per cent to IR£13.6 billion; there would be a current account surplus of IR£193 million. Lower than expected debt costs and high tax receipts had produced an unexpected surplus of IR£292 million in 1996-97. With economic activity continuing to be buoyant, GDP was forecast to grow 5.5 per cent in 1997.

Quinn reduced the standard rate of income tax by 1 percentage point to 26 per cent and raised personal allowances. He also raised the tax thresholds, taking around 10,000 people out of the tax net. He said that IR£525 million would be spent over 1997-99 to boost social security payments. Corporation tax was cut and tax incentives were introduced to encourage companies to list on the Developing Companies Market, a facility introduced in an effort to stem the reduction in the number of new issues on the main market. Quinn said that he hoped to "reward work, promote enterprise and strengthen social security". He declared that for the first time the country was seeing "a sustained net increase in jobs, net emigration [had] stopped and some people [were] coming home".

On Jan. 30 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions voted to support a one-year wage pact which provided for increases of 9.25 per cent over three years for public and private sector workers.

■ **Last article p. 41385; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

SWEDEN

Government changes

Prime Minister Goran Persson undertook a minor Cabinet reshuffle on Jan. 21, the most significant feature of which was the promotion of Thage G. Peterson to the position of de facto deputy prime minister. However, Persson resisted pressure from elements of his Social Democratic Party for large-scale changes to boost the government's flagging popularity in the face of public expenditure cuts and rising unemployment.

Posts affected were as follows:

+**Thage G. Peterson** Minister, Prime Minister's Office

+**Leif Pagrotsky** Industry and Trade

+**Bjorn von Sydow** Defence

+Altered responsibilities.

Allegations concerning Nazi gold held in Swedish banks

The Riksbank (central bank) promised on Jan. 21 that it would launch early in February a full independent investigation of its wartime transactions. The announcement followed the publication of a report in the daily *Dagens Nyheter* suggesting that the wartime Swedish government had received large quantities of looted gold from Nazi Germany. Sweden, which had been neutral during the Second World War, had considered itself free of "tainted" gold after the Riksbank had identified and returned over 13,152 kg of looted gold to Belgium and the Netherlands after the War. However, the newspaper reported that between 1939 and early 1944 Sweden had received 34,564 kg of gold from Nazi Germany.

The report, based on documents in Swedish, Swiss and US archives, indicated that the the wartime Swedish government had been suspicious about the source of the gold, but that the then Trade Minister, Herman Eriksson, had instructed the Riksbank not to concern itself with the origin of the gold.

■ **Last article pp. 41291-92; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

EUROPEAN UNION

Foreign ministers' meeting

Foreign ministers from the 15 EU member states met in Brussels on Jan. 20 to discuss the revision of the EU treaties as part of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) [see p. 41423]. The ministers sought to break the deadlock over the structure of policy-making within the EU, and held the first substantive discussion on "flexible" decision-making to allow groups of member states to pursue greater integration. However, the meeting ended without any consensus being reached.

A strong group of member states, led by France and Germany, pressed for the adoption of a scheme to allow deeper integration between some members. Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister, declared that "no member state should be able to block the way ahead by means of the veto". This position was, however, opposed by a group of countries including Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Sweden and the UK, which were concerned that it could lead to the creation of an elite group working to the detriment of other members. Although, the UK Prime Minister John Major had earlier in the month signalled that the UK would not be opposed to the creation of a so-called multi-speed Europe, at the Brussels meeting the UK insisted on its right to veto changes to the existing rules. David Davis, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Minister of State for European Affairs, said that the "EU [was] not a franchise operation" and insisted that the UK would "want to keep [its] right to veto proposals not just on a subject-by-subject but on a case-by-case basis". The UK also demanded that no members should be penalized for not taking part in selective co-operation. Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini presented an alternative proposal which provided for decisions by a qualified majority, the establishment of a key role for the European Commission, and an agreement that certain areas—such as competition policy, the common agricultural and fisheries policies and the single market—should remain outside the bounds of selective co-operation.

Fining of Italy and Germany

The European Commission on Jan. 20 moved to impose fines on Germany and Italy for breaching EU legislation. This was the first occasion that the Commission had sought to apply its powers to fine members states under Article 171 of the Maastricht Treaty.

The Commission recommended that Germany should pay ECU448,400 (US$1.00=ECU0.83 as at Jan. 17) per day for each day it continued to infringe environmental laws relating to the protection of wild birds, groundwater and surface water, while Italy should pay daily fines of ECU282,900 also for failure to comply with environmental legislation. The Commission's recommendations required endorsement by the European Court of Justice before being implemented.

Cull of German cattle

The German government on Jan. 22 authorized the slaughter of more than 5,000 cattle originating from Switzerland and the UK in an effort to protect German beef sales.

Both Switzerland and the UK had bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), popularly know as "mad cow disease", in their herds [see pp. 41008-09; 41056; 41116; 41156-57; 41206; 41291]. The cull order followed the death of a German-born calf from BSE; the cow thought to be the calf's mother had been imported from the UK. It was the fifth animal in Germany to have died of BSE since 1992 and the first since 1994.

Imposition of rice quota

On Jan. 8 the European Commission imposed a quota on rice imports from the overseas territories of members states in a move to protect EU rice producers. The move limited imports from these areas to 42,650 tonnes for the first four months of 1997.

For the previous six years imports from territories such as the Netherlands Antilles, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands had entered the EU without quotas or tariffs and had risen dramatically from 58,000 tonnes in 1992 and to 365,029 tonnes in 1995. The Commission's decision followed pressure from Italy and Spain, the EU's biggest rice producers.

Election of new parliamentary speaker

José Maris Gil Robles, a Spanish Christian Democrat, was elected Speaker of the European Parliament on Jan. 14 for a 2½ year-term; she succeeding German Social Democrat Klaus Hänsch [see p. 40119].

Gil Robles was challenged by Catherine Lalumière, a French socialist MEP, who stood for the post as a protest against what she called "a violation of the spirit of democracy". Since 1979 the presidency had alternated between the Socialists and Christian Democrats, the two largest groups in the parliament.

■ **Last article p. 41423; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

IN BRIEF

ARMENIA: On Jan. 10 Prime Minister Armen Sarkissian appointed one of his predecessors, Khosrov Haroutunian, as his senior adviser; Haroutunian had resigned as Prime Minister in February 1993 [see p. 39332].

DENMARK: On Jan. 18 police that claimed they had foiled a letter-bombing campaign aimed at the UK following the arrest of seven suspected members of an unnamed international right-wing terrorist group.

MONACO: Ceremonies to mark the 700th anniversary of the rule of Royal Grimaldi were held on Jan. 7; celebrations were expected to take place throughout 1997.

MIDDLE EAST-ARAB WORLD

MIDDLE EAST

Hebron deal

After months of US-mediated negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, the two sides finally signed on Jan. 15 an agreement which provided for an Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank city of Hebron. The agreement was the first to be signed by the Palestinians and the Likud government of Binyamin Netanyahu. While it was of significant symbolic importance, the agreement largely reiterated commitments made by both sides in the interim—or "Oslo B"—Israeli-Palestinian agreement signed in September 1995 [see pp. 40748-49].

Under the terms of "Oslo B", Israel was to have pulled most of its troops out of Hebron by March 1996. The withdrawal was postponed by a series of suicide bombings in Israel in February and March [see pp. 40975; 41021] and by the Likud/Netanyahu victory in the May general election [see pp. 41117-18]. Netanyahu had promised Israelis an improved deal with regard to Hebron. In the event, the agreement was almost identical with "Oslo B". Commentators noted that during the negotiations Israel had been forced to drop demands that its troops be given the right of "hot pursuit" in Palestinian-controlled Hebron, and also failed to expand those areas of the town which would remain under its control.

Reports indicated that the Hebron protocol was effectively finalized in early January and that subsequent negotiations covered, in the main, Israel's planned withdrawal from the rural areas of the West Bank. Under "Oslo B", Israel had agreed to complete this rural withdrawal by September 1997. The Netanyahu government had, however, made it clear that it wanted to delay the final withdrawal until the end of 1999, thereby linking it to the success of the so-called "final status" negotiations, scheduled to end at that time. Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yassir Arafat held a secret meeting to discuss the issue at the Bayt Hanun (Erez) checkpoint on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip on Jan. 5. After further negotiation—mediated by Denis Ross, US special co-ordinator for the Middle East peace talks—and intervention by King Hussein of Jordan, the two sides settled on a mid-1998 compromise date for a final Israeli withdrawal. However, while the timetable for the withdrawal was established, the extent of the withdrawal remained vague. The Palestinian side argued that "Oslo B" provided for a redeployment from 90 per cent of the West Bank, a figure reportedly contested by Israel.

Signing of Hebron agreement and other related documents

The Hebron agreement was signed by Israeli and Palestinian officials early in the morning of Jan. 15 after a low-key meeting between Arafat, Netanyahu and Ross at the Bayt Hanun checkpoint.

While Netanyahu and Arafat declined to talk to reporters after the Jan. 15 signing, the chief Palestinian negotiator, Mahmoud Abbas, said: "We are glad we have finalized the Hebron deal. It is the first agreement we have with the Likud. We hope this will be the beginning of more deals with this government".

The protocol concerning the redeployment in Hebron detailed the civilian and security arrangements for the city. Under the terms of the agreement, Israel agreed to withdraw from four-fifths of Hebron within 10 days. Around 100,000 Palestinians on the western side of the city (known as H1), came under the control of the Palestinian Authority. The eastern fifth of the city (H2), where some 450 Jews lived alongside 20,000 Palestinians, remained under Israeli control. Civilians were permitted to pass between the two parts of the city.

The city would have 400 Palestinian police officers, armed with 100 rifles and 200 pistols. In areas close to the Jewish enclave, they would be armed only with pistols. A joint Israeli-Palestinian force would patrol the heights overlooking the Jewish enclave. The two sides would also establish "joint intervention teams" to respond to unrest. Israel would re-open the Arab Market and Al-Shuhada (Martyrs') Street, one of the main thoroughfares passing through the Jewish area.

The two sides also signed a US plan for Al-Shuhada Street. This listed US-financed security arrangements for the street which ran next to the settlers' buildings.

In addition, a US "Note for the Record" was signed, which listed commitments made by Arafat and Netanyahu on non-Hebron related issues. The two agreed that the Oslo peace process "must move forward to succeed", and that "final status" talks would resume within two months of the Hebron redeployment.

The note also outlined various responsibilities for each party. Israel agreed to: (i) carry out the first phase of further redeployments from the rural West Bank during the first week in March; (ii)

deal with the release of Palestinian prisoners in accordance with the "Oslo B" agreement; and (iii) resume negotiations on various issues including safe passage, Gaza port and airport, and economic, financial, civilian and security issues. The Palestinians agreed to: (i) revise the PLO National Charter; (ii) attempt to prevent Palestinian violence; and (iii) adhere to "Oslo B" with regard to the size of the police force and the exercise of governmental activity.

The final document signed was a letter from outgoing US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Netanyahu which dealt with future Israeli military redeployments, to end "not later than mid-1998". According to The *Guardian* of Jan. 16, the letter implied US support for Israel's view of what constituted "specified military locations", which Israel wanted to exempt from further redeployments.

In his letter Christopher stated: "You can be assured that the United States' commitment to Israel's security is iron-clad and constitutes the fundamental cornerstone of our special relationship. The key element in our approach to peace, including the negotiations and implementation of agreements between Israel and its Arab partners, has always been a recognition of Israel's security requirements. Moreover, a hallmark of US policy remains our commitment to work co-operatively to seek to meet the security needs that Israel identifies. Finally, I would like to reiterate our position that Israel is entitled to secure and defensible borders, which should be directly negotiated and agreed with its neighbours".

Israeli and Palestinian approval of agreement

The Hebron agreement was approved by the Palestinian and Israeli Cabinets on Jan. 15.

In the case of the latter, it was achieved by a margin of 11 to 7 after a long and stormy debate. The approval came in the face of fierce opposition from the right of Netanyahu's Likud party. Following the debate, Binyamin Begin announced his intention to resign as Minister of Science and Technology in protest at the vote [see p. 41471]. The Knesset, the Israeli legislature, approved the agreement on Jan. 16 by 87 votes to 17, with one abstention.

Withdrawal of Israeli forces from Hebron

Israel withdrew its troops from most of Hebron at dawn on Jan. 17. Some 2,500 troops remained in the city to guard the Jewish settlers, many of whom conducted ceremonies of mourning.

After the withdrawal, crowds of Palestinians massed outside Tegart Fort, Israel's military headquarters until its formal transfer to Palestinian control at 6.10 am. The crowd chanted slogans and songs in memory of Yahya Ayyash (the "Engineer"), the chief Hamas bomb-maker until his assassination by Israeli agents in January 1996 [see p. 40926].

Visit by Arafat to Hebron

Arafat visited Hebron on Jan. 19 when he delivered a notably conciliatory speech to a crowd of some 50,000 outside Tegart Fort. It was Arafat's first visit to the city since 1965. After declaring Hebron "a liberated city", he told the crowd that he did not want "confrontation" with the city's Jewish settlers, but a "just peace".

The tone of Arafat's speech was in sharp contrast to a speech delivered on the previous day by Jibril Rajoub, head of the preventative security forces of the Palestinian Authority. In his speech, Rajoub had called for the expulsion of all Jewish settlers from Hebron.

After delivering his speech Arafat met with local Hamas leaders. According to the *Middle East International* of Jan. 24, Hamas told Arafat they would not attempt to ruin the Hebron agreement, but would express their "disappointment" through "democratic channels".

Appointment of Palestinian minister

Arafat appointed Talal Sider to the new post of Minister of Sport in the Palestinian Cabinet on Jan. 24. Sider had close links with Hamas and his appointment marked an important step in Arafat's efforts to ensure that his "rejectionist" opponents maintained the peace in Hebron.

Attack on Hebron civilians by Israeli soldier

On Jan. 1 an off-duty Israeli soldier, Noam Friedman, aged 19, emptied his M-16 automatic rifle into a crowded market in central Hebron, injuring seven Palestinians.

Friedman, who was wrestled to the ground and arrested by an Israeli army officer, told Israeli television that he had carried out the attack for the good of Israel. Netanyahu telephoned Arafat to condemn the attack, as did also US President Bill Clinton.

Arafat statement on Palestinian statehood

During a visit to Cairo on Jan. 22, Arafat announced that a declaration of Palestinian statehood would probably be made in mid-1998, before the conclusion of final-status negotiations. The question of Palestinian statehood, Arafat said, was "an Arab [and an] international issue" and "not an Israeli issue".

Netanyahu responded on Jan. 23, saying that while the Palestinian side could discuss statehood during final-status negotiations, they would not be allowed to make a unilateral declaration. Asked what he would do if such a step were taken, Netanyahu said: "A great deal. I have a contingency plan ready." According to some reports, Netanyahu's "contingency plan" involved the reoccupation of rural areas in the West Bank due to be handed over to Palestinian self-rule.

Arafat appeared to renounce his earlier statement during a meeting with a group of retired Israeli army officers in Gaza on Jan. 27. During the meeting, which was also attended by a reporter from the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Arafat said that he did not intend to declare statehood "until the conclusion of negotiations on the permanent status".

During his meeting with the officers, Arafat called on Israel to join with the Palestinians in a joint struggle against the regime in Iran. "The Iranians", he said, "are leading those who are fighting against me. We must fight against them, win and strengthen the peace."

Israel-Syria track

On Jan. 22 *Yedioth Ahronoth* published details of the 1997 Working Plan of Mossad, Israel's major intelligence agency. The Plan concluded that unless peace negotiations between Israel and Syria resumed, war between the two countries was likely before the end of 1997. The Israel-Syria track of the Middle East peace process had broken down in March 1996 in the aftermath of a series of devastating Hamas suicide bomb attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv [see pp. 41021-22].

Mossad's Working Plan said that Syria, with newly acquired non-conventional missile capabilities, had in 1997 become "the number one threat on the security establishment's agenda".

The Times of Jan. 30 reported that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) were conducting a detailed investigation into how northern Israel could be defended without continued possession of the Golan Heights. The review had reportedly been ordered by Itzhak Mordechai, the Israeli Defence Minister, despite the refusal of the Israeli government to countenance any territorial concessions over the Golan.

■ Last article p. 41425; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

ISRAEL

Corruption allegations over appointment of attorney general

Israel's Justice Ministry announced on Jan. 26 that an official police investigation would take place into allegations of corruption over the appointment of Roni Bar-On to the post of Attorney General.

Bar-On, a little-known lawyer and a member of the central committee of the ruling Likud, was appointed Attorney General in place of Michael Ben-Yair on Jan. 10, but resigned within 12 hours after he was accused of being unfit for the post. The *Independent* of Jan. 27 reported that Bar-On's appointment had been greeted with "astonishment and derision" by the legal profession and senior judges. Many press reports noted that Bar-On was alleged to be a heavy gambler. He had been recommended for the post by Tzahi Hanegbi, who had replaced Yaakov Neeman as Israel's Justice Minister following the latter's resignation in August 1996 [see p. 41248].

The official investigation was provoked by allegations which were broadcast on Jan. 22 by Israel's Channel One television station, which was part of the independent but publicly financed state network. Channel One alleged that Shas, the largest ultra-orthodox party in the Likud-led governing coalition, had threatened to withdraw support for an Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank town of Hebron [see p. 41469-70] if Bar-On, its nominee, was not appointed Attorney General. The broadcast also alleged that Bar-On had promised Aryeh Der'i, the Shas leader and former Interior Minister who was awaiting trial on charges of bribery and fraud [see pp. 39885; 39710], a plea bargain if he was appointed as Attorney General. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu strenuously denied the Channel One allegations.

On Jan. 29 the Cabinet endorsed the appointment of Elyaqim Rubinstein as Attorney General.

Opening of Olmert trial

The trial of Ehud Olmert, the Mayor of Jerusalem, opened in Tel Aviv on Jan. 14. Olmert, a close political ally of Netanyahu, was accused of campaign-financing fraud in the 1988 general election, when he had held the post of treasurer in the Likud party.

Olmert denied involvement in an alleged fictitious public relations company set up to receive and disguise illegal corporate donations to the Likud.

Government change

Binyamin Begin (Likud) announced his resignation as Minister of Science and Technology on Jan. 15 in protest at a Cabinet vote in favour of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement on an Israeli withdrawal from Hebron.

Bomb attacks in Tel Aviv

At least 13 people were injured—two seriously—by bomb attacks in central Tel Aviv on Jan. 9. Two unsophisticated nail-filled pipe bombs hidden in rubbish bins exploded in an area of the city which was home to thousands of foreign workers.

No group claimed responsibility for the bombs, but Israeli police said that it bore the hallmarks of an Arab terrorist attack. This was disputed, however, on Jan. 10 by Furayh Abu Middayn, the Palestinian Minister of Justice, who stated that "such attacks serve only Netanyahu". On the same day The *Independent* suggested that the explosions might have been linked to a criminal feud.

Approval of 1997 budget

The Knesset approved the 1997 budget on Jan. 1 [for 1996 budget see p. 40881].

The *Financial Times* of Jan. 2 reported that the budget included NIS4.8 billion in expenditure cuts and NIS2.4 billion in increased revenue (US$1.00=NIS3.25 as at Dec. 31, 1996). The report quoted Finance Minister Dan Meridor as stating that the budget laid the groundwork for reducing the budget deficit to 2.8 per cent of GDP in 1997. The 1996 deficit was expected to reach between 4 and 4.5 per cent of GDP.

■ **Last article p. 41426; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

SYRIA

Damascus bomb attack

A government spokesman informed the official Syrian news agency SANA on Jan. 2 that a bomb attack in central Damascus (the Syrian capital) on Dec. 31 had been the work of Israeli agents from Mossad, the main Israeli intelligence agency. Israel denied the charge.

The bomb, which had been planted on a bus, had killed 11 people and wounded 42 others. On Jan. 9 a Syrian-based group called the Islamic Movement for Change (IMC) claimed responsibility for the attack. The group stated that the bombing had been carried out to avenge the "execution" of one of its members, Shaikh Jaafar Bin Alhaj Qassem Marzouk al-Shwaikhat, who it claimed had taken part in the attack on a US military base in the Saudi Arabian city of Al-Khobar in June 1996 [see p. 41169]. The *Guardian* of Jan. 10, citing Syrian reports, stated that Shwaikhat had committed suicide in prison in 1996. However, Syrian officials dismissed the IMC statement, faxed to a press agency in Cyprus, as the work of the Israeli intelligence services.

The Damascus bomb followed reports earlier in the year of several explosions in Syria [see pp. 41167-68]. It also followed a spate of attacks on Syrian targets in Lebanon during December. Syria had blamed these incidents—two of which were gun attacks on buses carrying Syrian workers—on Israel, acting through Maronite Christian agents.

Operation on President Assad

SANA reported on Jan. 7 that President Hafez al-Assad had undergone successful prostate surgery and would resume his official duties "in a few days".

■ **Last articles pp. 41426; 41250; 41208-09; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

LEBANON

Fighting in the south - Katyusha rocket attack on northern Israel

A clash between Hezbollah guerrillas and Israeli soldiers in Israel's self-declared "security zone" in southern Lebanon on Jan. 8 resulted in the deaths of one Israeli soldier and three Hezbollah fighters. Another three Israeli soldiers were injured in a separate incident earlier the same day when a bomb exploded near an Israeli patrol unit.

A Katyusha rocket was fired from southern Lebanon into northern Israel on Jan. 8. No one claimed responsibility for the attack, which effectively violated the US- and French-brokered ceasefire "understanding" which had ended Israel's April 1996 Grapes of Wrath military operation in Lebanon [see p. 41069]. Lebanese officials denied that the rocket had been fired by Hezbollah or Amal, the two main elements of the so-called Lebanese resistance. The *Middle East International* of Jan. 24 reported that "a plausible scapegoat" had been found in the form of two Palestinians, alleged members of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), who had been arrested by Lebanese troops near Tyre on suspicion of having fired the rocket.

The Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group (ILMG, the monitoring committee established in April to supervise the ceasefire "understanding") convened in Naqurah on Jan. 10 to investigate the rocket attack. The ILMG—consisting of representatives from the USA, France, Syria, Lebanon and Israel—condemned the attack and welcomed measures taken by the Lebanese government to prevent the recurrence of such an incident.

Three Israeli soldiers were killed and a fourth wounded when Hezbollah guerrillas detonated a bomb beside a patrol in the "security zone" on Jan. 30.

Casualty figures for 1996

The *Independent* of Jan. 2 reported that fighting between the Lebanese resistance and Israeli forces and their proxy militia ally, the South Lebanese Army (SLA), in southern Lebanon had killed 255 people in 1996, including 27 Israeli soldiers.

The 1996 figure was the highest annual Israeli death toll in Lebanon since 1985, when 37 soldiers had died. (In 1995, 21 Israelis were amongst 201 people killed through guerrilla-based conflict in Lebanon). In addition to the 27 Israeli casualties, the 1996 deaths included 155 civilians, 54 guerrillas—mainly Hezbollah fighters—and 19 SLA militiamen. The main reason behind the rise

in the death toll in 1996 was Israel's Grapes of Wrath operation which had killed at least 170 people, most of whom were civilians [see pp. 41070-71].

■ Last article p. 41426; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

JORDAN

Protests over Israeli trade fair

On Jan. 8 over 2,500 demonstrators protested against the presence of an Israeli trade fair at a site some 20km south of the capital, Amman. Around 70 Israeli companies were represented at the fair which had been organized by a Jordanian company.

The demonstrators included representatives from 20 of the country's 23 officially registered political parties, members of the legislature, students, union activists and business leaders.

■ Last article p. 41392; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

IRAQ

Reported turmoil within President Saddam's family

Reports in the Western press in late January indicated that close links between members of President Saddam Hussein's immediate family and between members of the ruling Tikriti clan were under considerable strain in the aftermath of an audacious attempt to kill Saddam's son and chosen successor, Udai Hussein, on Dec. 12 [see p. 41425]. The reports were largely based on material provided during briefings to journalists by US military officials.

The reports stated that Saddam had placed his wife, Sajida, under house arrest. Some reports claimed that Saddam had acted after Sajida had criticized his failure to secure foreign medical treatment for Udai. As a result of the December attack, Udai was reported to have one or two bullets lodged in his spine and was believed to be paralysed from the waist down. Despite Udai's injuries, however, it was reported that Saddam had recently ordered him to marry the 16-year-old daughter of Ali Hassan al-Majid. Majid was Saddam's cousin and one of his closest advisers. The *Guardian* of Jan. 30 said that Saddam had ordered the marriage to demonstrate that Udai "was in good shape".

Saddam's family difficulties were compounded by the presence of his grieving daughters, Raghad and Rana, whose husbands, Hussein Kamil and Saddam Kamil, had been murdered—allegedly on the orders of Udai—after they returned to Iraq in February 1996 from Jordan, where they had defected [see p. 40973].

The *Independent* of Jan. 23 claimed that the attack on Udai had been organized by Ra'ad al-Hazaa, a former Iraqi army officer and nephew of Gen. Omar al-Hazaa. A member of the ruling Tikriti clan, Gen. Hazaa had been arrested in 1990 after criticizing Saddam; he was executed, reputedly after his tongue was cut out. According to the report, Ra'ad was currently living in Iran.

Death of presidential adviser

Official Baghdad radio reported on Jan. 12 that Abdullah Fadil Abbas (whose tribal name was al-Samarai), an adviser to President Saddam, had died in a "regrettable accident". Abbas was a former Minister of Awqaf (religious endowments) and Religious Affairs who had held several key posts in the ruling Ba'ath Party.

Attack on MKO offices

The offices of the Iranian opposition Mujahedeen-i-Khalq (MKO) in Baghdad were subjected to a mortar attack on Jan. 7.

Baghdad radio on Jan. 8 said the attack had damaged a hospital and a health laboratory and that one civilian had been "martyred". The report said that "the Iranian regime" had been involved in the attack.

■ Last article pp. 41424-25; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

IRAN

Creation of Qazvin province

On Jan. 1 the Majlis (the legislature) voted to give the city of Qazvin, some 130km north-west of the capital, Tehran, the status of a province.

In August 1994 serious unrest had erupted in Qazvin when the Majlis had rejected a government bill proposing the separation of the city from the province of Zanjan, and the creation of a new province of Qazvin [see pp. 40161-62]. The ethnic Persians of Qazvin were said to have long resented the administration of their affairs by the Azeri-speaking Zanjanis. In September 1994 the Cabinet approved a compromise in the form of the separation of Qazvin from Zanjani province and its integration with Tehran province [see p. 40206].

Labour Ministry order to dismiss foreign workers

The *Middle East Economic Digest* of Jan. 13 reported that the Labour Ministry had recently ordered employers to dismiss an estimated 1,000,000 foreign workers, mostly Afghan refugees, by Jan. 4, claiming the majority to be illegal immigrants.

Iran, which suffered from an official unemployment rate of nearly 11 per cent, was home to some 2,000,000 refugees, 1,400,000 from Afghanistan and 600,000 from Iraq. Reports indicated that the deadline of Jan. 4 was widely ignored, particularly in provinces where Afghans provided cheap labour.

■ Last article p. 41425; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

SAUDI ARABIA

1997 budget - Revised 1996 figures

King Fahd ibn Abdul Aziz announced the 1997 budget at the weekly Cabinet meeting held on Dec. 30, 1996 [for details of 1996 budget see p. 40928].

Revenue for 1997, which analysts believed to be based on an average net oil price of around US$16 a barrel, was projected at SR164 billion (US$1.00=SR3.75 as at Dec. 31, 1996). Oil revenues were responsible for some 80 per cent of budget revenue. Total expenditure was set at SR181 billion, leaving a deficit of SR17 billion. Education spending was increased by more than 50 per cent to SR41.7 billion. Other sectors receiving more funding included health and social services, infrastructure and industry and municipal services, including water. The King failed to announce budget allocations for defence and security. The *Financial Times* of Jan. 2, citing senior diplomatic sources, claimed that defence and security expenditure had risen by 11 per cent to some SR50 billion.

Economic figures for 1996 released in early 1997 showed that strong oil prices had provided a windfall, boosting revenue to SR177 billion, up from the SR131.5 billion on which the budget had originally been based. The 1996 budget had been based on an average oil price of US$14 a barrel. However, since July Saudi crude had commanded nearer the US$22 level at which it stood at the start of 1997. Firm oil prices also helped the government achieve a current account surplus of SR700 million in 1996, compared with a 1995 deficit of SR19.9 billion. Reports stated that it was the first officially recorded current account surplus since 1983.

Dispute with USA over Al-Khobar bomb investigation

Reports in January indicated that Saudi Arabia and the US government were in dispute over the investigation into the bombing of the US military housing complex at Al-Khobar in June 1996 in which 19 US citizens were killed [see p. 41169].

In late January Janet Reno, the US Attorney General, and Louis Freeh, the Director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), both accused the Saudi authorities of withholding evidence about the Al-Khobar bombing. The criticism was a reversal of the US government's

previous suggestion that the Saudis were willing to co-operate with the enquiries.

The Saudi authorities were reported to be holding in custody some 40 people suspected of involvement in the bombing. Most of the suspects were reported to be Shia Muslims with links to Iran.

■ Last article p. 41169; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

YEMEN

Islah boycott of budget debate

The House of Representatives (the legislature) approved the budget for 1997 on Jan. 1, despite a boycott of the session by most members of the Yemeni Alliance for Reform (al-Islah), the minority coalition partner of the ruling General People's Congress.

The House budget session was attended by only nine of Islah's 62 members, including leader and House Speaker Shaikh Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, who voted in support of the budget. The Islah members boycotted the session in protest at the government's handling of the budget, claiming that they were not given adequate opportunity to discuss it before it was placed before the House. However, the *Middle East Economic Digest* of Jan. 6, citing Yemeni parliamentary sources, said that Islah had been angered by proposals to abolish separate budget allocations for religious schools—previously overseen by Islah—and merge them with general education expenditure.

■ Last article p. 41345; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

QATAR

Reconciliation between Amir and Shaikh Khalifa

The Amir, Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani, reportedly reached an agreement in early January with his father, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Hamad al-Thani, whom he had deposed in June 1995 [see p. 40622]. Under the terms of the agreement, arrived at after talks between the two men in Paris, Shaikh Hamad was expected to allow his father to return to Qatar.

The agreement followed the announcement in October 1996 from the Justice Ministry that the state of Qatar had reached an out-of-court settlement with Shaikh Khalifa over the billions of dollars in state funds which the government had accused Khalifa of transferring into a private account [see pp. 41344-45].

■ Last article p. 41394; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

ALGERIA

Algiers car bombs and Ramadan violence

High levels of violence continued throughout January both in Algiers and a number of towns and villages. Some commentators identified an upsurge in Islamist killings with the month of Ramadan, which began on Jan. 10.

Car bombs exploded in Algiers on Jan. 7 (Place Audin), on Jan. 19 (the Belcourt district), and on Jan. 21 (in the Sidi Mohammed district and at the Ryad al-Feth trade centre). Similar attacks also took place on Jan. 16 in Boufarik, and on Jan. 22 in Blida, towns south of Algiers. More than 100 people were killed in the bombings. Village massacres, sometimes involving up to as many as 16 victims at a time, also continued during the month, particularly to the south and west of the capital.

On Jan. 16 security forces clashed with some dozen members of the Islamist Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in the Casbah district of Algiers.

Criticism of anti-Islamist militias by Ait Ahmed

The secretary-general of the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), Hocine Ait Ahmed, in an interview published in the London-based *Asharq al-Awsat* newspaper on Jan. 14, criticized the government's practice (adopted in 1994) of allowing local anti-Islamist militias to be formed. He said these militias were involved in smuggling, organized crime, and score-settling between families and clans.

UGTA strike - Assassination of leader

The General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) called its members out on strike on Jan. 14-15 in protest over plans to make deductions from civil servants' salaries in order to pay overdue salaries owed to other employees in state-owned industries. After the strike was reportedly widely observed on Jan. 14, Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia postponed from February until March the onset of the salary cuts.

The leader of the UGTA, Abdelhak Benhamouda, was killed by gunmen outside the union's headquarters in central Algiers on Jan. 28.

Regarded as strongly anti-Islamist and an ally of President Liamine Zeroual, Benhamouda had recently announced that he was to form a political party. This party would, according to the press sources, have aimed at consolidating a pro-Zeroual bloc in the legislative elections expected to be held by June.

■ Last article p. 41345; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

TUNISIA

Release of imprisoned opposition leader Moada

Mohammed Moada, the former secretary-general of the main opposition party, the Mouvement des démocrates socialistes (MDS), was on Dec. 31 released from detention, on parole, on compassionate grounds.

Khemais Chamari, a member of the party's executive, was also released. The two had been sentenced to 11 and five years imprisonment in February [see p. 40978] and May 1996 respectively, on charges relating to Moada's alleged sharing of intelligence with a foreign state. The sentences had received widespread international condemnation.

Government changes

Nine Cabinet changes were announced on Jan. 22. The portfolios affected were as follows:

+**Mohamm ed Ben Rajab** Interior
+**Abderrahim Zouari** Foreign Affairs
+**Mohammed Jeri** Finance
+**Habib Ben Yahia** Defence
+**Mohammed Jegham** Director of Presidency
+**Abdallah Kallel** Justice
*__Ahmed Fria__ Communications
*__Mabrouk Bahri__ Agriculture
*__Raouf Najja__ Youth and Children

*New appointment.
+Altered responsibilities.

■ Last article p. 41210; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

LIBYA

Execution of eight alleged spies

Six military officers and two civilians were executed on Jan. 2, the officers by firing squad and the civilians by hanging. A military court had issued the death sentences the previous day. All eight men had been found guilty of supplying agents of foreign governments with information related to defence and of "belonging to a banned organization linked with agents of foreign governments".

A further group of five military officers, one police officer and two civilians were acquitted for lack of evidence.

An official who delivered a televised speech from the courtroom following the sentencing identified the foreign agency referred to in the verdicts as the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which was alleged to have supplied those convicted with "sophisticated equipment" for spying activities. The assertion was dismissed by the US State Department on Jan. 2 as a series of "wild charges".

International press commentators suggested that the death sentences were probably imposed in retaliation for an October 1993 coup attempt against the regime of Libyan leader Col. Moamer al Kadhafi. According to these accounts, all of those sentenced to death were members of the Warfallah tribe, which had apparently been closely implicated in the coup attempt. On Jan. 3 a spokesperson for the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, an exiled opposition group, said in a statement to the *Asharq al-Awsat* newspaper in London that those executed were "nationalists", and that some of them had "had contacts" with the front.

Call for Palestinians to return to Libya

The General People's Congress on Jan. 14 communicated to the Arab League that it wished all Palestinians in the Libya-Egypt border area to return to Libya. Following a September 1995 order expelling Palestinian residents from Libya, hundreds of Palestinians had been stranded in refugee camps on the border with Egypt (which had denied them entry), and had subsequently refused to return to Libya despite the fact that the deportation programme had been suspended the following month [see pp. 40752; 40800]. The move appeared to contradict earlier indications that the expulsion order itself was to be reversed [see p. 41346].

Visit by Farrakhan

Louis Farrakhan, leader of the US Nation of Islam, visited Tripoli on Jan. 5. He had previously visited Libya in August 1996 in order to receive a government award.

■ Last article p. 41346; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

EGYPT

Arrests of alleged Satanic youths

In late January 45 young people were arrested and charged with scorning religion, an offence which carried a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment. A further 31 people were arrested but released on bail. Most of the arrests took place in Cairo, and those detained were reportedly fans of heavy metal music. The local press suggested that the fans had allegedly held regular Satanic rituals, which the police said had taken place in the Commonwealth cemetery in the wealthy suburb of Heliopolis.

Launch of irrigation project

President Hosni Mubarak on Jan. 9 inaugurated a US$810 million project to irrigate1,234,568 ha of desert land by pumping water from Lake Nasser on the river Nile in southern (Upper) Egypt. Foreign investment was to be invited to participate in various stages of the project.

■ Last article p. 41345; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.

IN BRIEF

BAHRAIN: The Amir, Shaikh Isa bin Sulman al-Khalifa, issued a decree on Jan. 7 establishing a National Guard as a "military backup" for the Bahrain Defence Force and "to protect the IN homeland".

INTERNATIONAL

UNITED NATIONS

Secretariat appointments

Kofi Annan, who formally succeeded Boutros Boutros-Ghali as UN Secretary General on Jan. 1 [see pp. 41426-27], announced the membership of the new UN Secretariat on Jan. 28. Although the team included some new members, it was drawn predominantly from existing UN officials, with many incumbents retaining their posts and several others being promoted. Annan also abolished the post of Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and created the new post of adviser on external relations.

One notable appointment was that of Bernard Miyet, a French national, who replaced Annan as Under-Secretary-General of Peacekeeping Operations. Some commentators suggested that France had demanded the appointment in return for lifting its Security Council veto of Annan's own election in December.

The distribution of portfolios at the UN Secretariat was as follows:

Economic and Social Affairs

Under-Secretary-General level

+**Nitin Desai** (India) Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development

+**Jongjian Jin** (China) Department for Development Support and Management Services

Assistant Secretary-General level

#**Angela King** (*f*) (Jamaica) Special Adviser on Gender Issues; head of Division for Advancement of Women

Political, Security and Humanitarian Affairs

Under-Secretary-General level

+**Yasushi Akashi** (Japan) Head of Department of Humanitarian Affairs

***Bernard Miyet** (France) Head of Department of Peacekeeping Operations

***Sir Kieran Prendergast** (UK) Head of Department of Political Affairs

Assistant Secretary-General level

#**Hedi Annabi** (Tunisia) Department of Peacekeeping Operations

+**Alvar de Soto** (Peru) Department of Political Affairs

+**Manfred Eisele** (Germany) Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Legal, Administrative Affairs and Public Information

Under-Secretary-General level

+**Joseph Connor** (USA) Head of Administration and Management

+**Hans Corell** (Sweden) UN Legal Counsel

Assistant Secretary-General level

+**Jean-Pierre Halbwachs** (Mauritius) UN Controller

+**Denis Haliday** (Ireland) Head of Office of Human Resources

+**Samir Sanbar** (Lebanon) Head of Department of Public Information

+**Benon Sevan** (Cyprus) Head of the Office of Conference and Support Services

***Jean-Claude Aime** (Haiti) Head of UN Compensation Commission in connection with Iraq

Secretary-General's Executive Office

***S. Iqbal Riza** (Pakistan) Chef de Cabinet

***Gillian Sorensen** (*f*) (USA) Head of External Relations

***Fred Eckhard** Spokesman

+Confirmed in office.

#Internal promotion.

*New appointment.

Women are denoted by (*f*).

US debt pledge

During a three-day official visit to Washington on Jan. 23-25, Annan gave the US government assurances that he planned to reform the UN. He acknowledged that "if we do not change, we may lose our relevance . . . What the UN wants is what the US wants - to be

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effective, efficient, leaner and relevant". In return Annan received a pledge from US President Bill Clinton that he would work with Republicans in Congress to pay the US$1.3 billion debt owed to the UN by the US government.

The Clinton administration had agreed in principle with Congress that the total US share of the UN's annual budget should be reduced from 25 per cent to 21.7 per cent to match the country's share of the global economy. In return, Republican leaders in Congress had offered their support for the payment of the US$100 million of US arrears in 1997, with the remainder of the debt held in escrow until 1999.

■ **Last article pp. 41426-27; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

WAR CRIMES

Collapse of Serafinowicz trial

The UK trial of Szymon Serafinowicz, 86, collapsed on Jan. 17 after a jury at the Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey) in London decided that his mental incapacity was such that he could not be tried for murder. The decision came after a nine-day hearing during which evidence was presented which suggested that Serafinowicz was suffering from dementia—probably a result of Alzheimer's disease—to such an extent that he was incapable of instructing his lawyers, understanding the evidence, or following the court proceedings.

Serafinowicz had been committed for trial by a magistrate on three specimen charges of murdering unknown Jews during the systematic slaughter of 3,000 Jewish inhabitants of the Mir district of Belarus in 1941-42. Born in Belarus, Serafinowicz had admitted in the magistrate's court to serving as head of the local police under Nazi rule.

The trial of Serafinowicz, who had settled in the UK after the Second World War, was the first to be brought in the UK under the 1991 War Crimes Act [see pp. 37899; 38219]. The legislation had allowed charges relating to war crimes offences allegedly committed outside the country to be filed in UK courts. Despite the judgment the UK government was insistent that it would press ahead with the prosecutions of other alleged Nazi war criminals; the Crown Prosecutions Service stated that it intended to proceed with five other cases.

Supreme Court ruling against Papon

The French Supreme Court on Jan. 23 ordered former French police chief and government minister Maurice Papon, 86, to be tried for crimes against humanity. The court ordered that Papon be tried by jury in Bordeaux, the city where, as regional secretary-general under the collaborationist Vichy government, he had allegedly ordered the death or deportation of 1,690 French Jews.

The allegations had first emerged in 1981 and had been contested by Papon. The only senior Vichy official still alive, Papon had appealed to the Supreme Court following an appeal court decision against him in October 1996 [see p. 41347]. He attacked the Supreme Court decision as "scandalous" and said it would provide an opportunity for Communists, "the leftist lobby" and foreigners to smear France by linking the Vichy regime to the Nazi Holocaust.

■ **Last article p. 41347; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

ENVIRONMENT

Major oil spill off Japanese coast

The Russian-owned tanker *Nakhodka*, carrying some 5,000,000 gallons of fuel oil, broke in two on Jan. 2 some 150 km off Japan's western coast during a severe storm. Bad weather and high seas hampered the clean-up operation and fears of an environmental disaster were confirmed on Jan. 7 when oil slicks reached the coast along a 95-km stretch from Kyoto Prefecture to Fukui Prefecture, affecting fish farms, fishing ports and tourist resorts, as well as wildlife in the region.

Local officials stated that in Mikuni alone the spill threatened to wipe out the town's entire annual fishing income of 30,000,000 yen (US$1.00=116.20 yen as at Jan. 3). On Jan. 21 the government acknowledged that it had been slow to react to the crisis. The admission came as environmentalists reported that Sado Island, the habitat of the country's last crested ibis, had been affected by the accident.

■ **Last article p. 40979.**

COMMODITIES

Coffee producers' meeting

The Association of Coffee Producing Countries (ACPC) met for an emergency session in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Jan. 22-23, and agreed to cut exports by 1,300,000 60kg bags during the first half of 1997. This total was arrived at by producers of robusta coffee agreeing to cut exports by 1,000,000 bags, and those of arabica coffee by 300,000 bags.

The emergency meeting had taken place at the request of African members of ACPC after prices for robusta coffee fell in December in response to predictions of an excess supply. However, by Jan. 23 prices had been rising for three days, with prices on the London coffee market reaching US$1,570 per tonne. Although the rise was partly in anticipation of the decision to cut exports, there were also fears concerning short-term supplies, particularly in view of a strike by Colombian dock workers which had affected the transportation of some 300,000 bags. In addition there was concern over the size of the 1997 Brazilian coffee crop, with forecasts ranging from 17,000,000 to 21,000,000 bags compared with the 1996 harvest of 27,000,000 bags.

■ **Last article p. 41027; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

SPACE RESEARCH

Failure of Delta-2 rocket

A Delta-2 rocket exploded on take-off from Cape Canaveral on Jan. 17. The McDonnell Douglas-built rocket was carrying a global positioning satellite worth US$55,000,000 for the US Air Force. The explosion occurred less than four seconds into the flight, before the three-stage rocket had cleared the launch-pad tower. The US authorities suggested that there was no immediate explanation for the accident; the Delta was regarded as the one of the world's most reliable rockets.

■ **Last article p. 41395; for 1996 key events see 1997 reference supplement.**

OUTLINE INDEX TO JANUARY ISSUE

AFGHANISTAN Continued advance of Talibaan militia - Government changes 41451
ALBANIA Collapse of pyramid finance schemes - Outbreak of violent demonstrations 41454
ALGERIA Car bombs and Ramadan violence - Criticism of anti-Islamist militias 41473
ARGENTINA Visit to Falkland Islands by Argentinian relatives - Murder of journalist 41439
ARMENIA Former prime minister returns 41469
ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK ADF replenishment 41452
AUSTRALIA Further euthanasia deaths 41452
AUSTRIA Resignation of Vranitzky - Appointment of new government 41464
AZERBAIJAN Details of alleged 1996 coup plot - 41460
BAHRAIN National Guard created 41474
BANGLADESH Government changes - Release of Ershad - Ruling on coup trial 41448
BELARUS New government - Relations with Russia and Ukraine 41458
BELGIUM Anti-government protests 41466
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA Formation of Bosnian Cabinet - Donor conference 41455
BRAZIL Presidential re-election bill 41439
BULGARIA Political and economic crisis - Mass opposition protests - Inauguration of Stoyanof as President 41452
BURMA Withdrawal of PepsiCo - Sentencing of NLD Members 41451
BURUNDI Massacres by army 41432
CANADA Out-of-court settlement in Mulroney libel case 41438
CARIBBEAN Dependencies and the UK 41443
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC Fighting between French troops and mutineers 41430
CHAD Allegations of summary executions 41433
CHILE New intelligence system 41440
CHINA Visit to France by Qian Qichen - US report on human rights abuses 41445
COLOMBIA Announcement of state economic emergency 41440
COMESA Suspension of executive secretary 41435
COMMODITIES Coffee producers' meeting 41475
CONGO 1997 Budget 41435
CROATIA Granting of license to opposition radio station - Developments in eastern Slavonia 41456
CUBA Rejection of US financial assistance package - Visit by Canadian Foreign Minister 41442
CYPRUS Tension over plan to install Russian missile system 41461
CZECH REPUBLIC Signature of joint declaration by Czech Republic and Germany 41461
DENMARK Police foil letter-bombing 41469
EGYPT Arrests of alleged Satanic youths - Launch of irrigation project 41474
ESTONIA Refusal of Russia to sign border agreement - Decision by Council of Europe to cease monitoring of Estonia 41459
ETHIOPIA Death of Asfa Wossen - Defection of football players 41432
EUROPEAN UNION Foreign ministers' meeting - Fining of Germany and Italy - Cull of German cattle - 41468
FRANCE Efforts to trace Jewish assets - Increased security measures 41463
GABON Landslide victory for PDG - Re-appointment of Obame-Nguema as Prime Minister 41434
THE GAMBIA Legislative elections 41434 mercemaries 41431
GERMANY Presentation of controversial tax reforms - Controversy over position of the Church of Scientology - New trial of Wolf 41464
GHANA Jerry Rawlings sworn in as President 41435
GREECE Protests over government austerity plans - Renewal of farmers' protests 41462
GUATEMALA Provision of international aid to assist peace accord - Government changes 41441
GUINEA 1997 Budget 41435
GUINEA-BISSAU Lusophone region to join franc zone in May
HONDURAS Government changes 41442
HONG KONG Appointment of Executive Council - First meeting of provisional legislature 41446
INDIA Election of Kesri as Congress (I) parliamentary leader - Kashmir violence - PWG attack in Andra Pradesh 41448
INDONESIA Ethnic unrest in Kalimantan and Java - 1997-1998 budget 41450
IRAN Creation of Qazvin province - Labour Ministry order to dismiss foreign workers 41472
IRAQ Reported turmoil within President Saddam's family 41472
IRELAND 1997-98 budget 41468
IRELAND, NORTHERN Deterioration in security situation - Abandonment of Whitemoor escape trial 41467
ISRAEL Corruption allegations over appointment of attorney general - Opening of Olmert trial - Government change - Bomb attacks on Tel Aviv 41470
ITALY Resignation of judge in Berlusconi trial - Acquittal of Berlusconi's brother 41465
JAPAN Key policy speech by Prime Minister - Developments in corruption and fraud scandals - Collapse of finance house - First payment to comfort women 41444
JORDAN Protests over Israeli trade fair 41472
KENYA Government changes - Torture accusations 41432
KYRGYZSTAN Party chair guilty of embezzlement 41452
LATVIA Resignation and renomination of Prime Minister 41460
LEBANON Fighting in the south - Katyusha rocket attack on northern Israel 41471
LIBERIA Difficulties of disarmament process - Resumption of Council of States 41434
LIBYA Execution of eight alleged spies - Call for Palestinians to return to Libya - Farrakhan visit 41473
MADAGASCAR Return of Ratsiraka 41435
MALAWI President charged with embezzlement 41435
MALI Announcement of electoral timetable 41433
MARSHALL ISLANDS Election of new President 41452
MAURITANIA Government changes 41433
MEXICO Rejection of additional election funding by opposition parties - Debt repayment to USA 41441
MIDDLE EAST Hebron deal - New Palestinian minister - Attack on Hebron civilians by Israeli soldier - Arafat statement on Palestinian statehood 41469
MOLDOVA Inauguration of new President 41460
MONACO 700th anniversary of Royal Grimaldi 41469
NEPAL Government changes - By-elections 41449
NICARAGUA Inauguration of new government 41442
NIGER Niamey demonstration - Arrest of opposition leaders 41433
NIGERIA 1997 Budget - Bomb explosion in Lagos 41434
PAKISTAN National Security Council - Supreme Court ruling on Bhutto dismissal - Fatal gas leak 41447
PARAGUAY Officers involved in aborted rebellion 41443
PERU Continued deadlock in hostage crisis 41438
PHILIPPINES MILF peace talks 41451
POLAND Government change - New party 41460
QATAR Reconciliation between Amir and Shaikh Khalifa 41473
ROMANIA Arrest of miners' leader 41461
RUSSIA Attempt to remove President Yeltsin - Elections in Chechnya - Withdrawal of remaining troops - Local elections 41456
RWANDA Imposition of first death sentence for genocide - Army reprisals after Hutu murders 41431
SAUDI ARABIA Dispute with USA over Al-Khobar bomb investigation 41472
SINGAPORE General election - Flight of Tang to Malaysia - Government reshuffle 41449
SLOVENIA Re-election of Drnovsek as Prime Minister 41456
SOMALIA National Salvation Council formed 41432
SOUTH AFRICA Confessions of Biko killers - Inkatha resignations - Arms row - Arrest of bombers 41430
SOUTH KOREA Continued strike action in response to new labour law - OECD rebuke over labour laws - Bankruptcy of Hanbo 41443
SPACE RESEARCH Failure of Delta-2 rocket 41475
SPAIN Gibralter co-sovereignty offer to UK - ETA violence - Reduction in interest rates 41462
SRI LANKA LTTE attack on Paranthon 41449
SUDAN Intensification of war in the south 41432
SWEDEN Government changes - Allegations concerning Nazi gold held in Swedish banks 41468
SWITZERLAND Continuing pressure on banks over Nazi links 41461
SYRIA Damascus bomb attack 41471
TAIWAN Resignation of Soong as Taiwan Govenor 41446
TAJIKISTAN Peace talks in Iran 41452
TANZANIA Financial reforms divide NBC 41435
TUNISIA Release of imprisoned opposition leader Moada - Government changes 41473
TURKEY Allegations of state involvement with criminal gangs 41462
UKRAINE Opening of Constitutional Court - Tension with Russia over Sevastopol 41459
UNITED KINGDOM Growing fragility of government - Controversy over new royal yacht - Creation of food safety council 41467
UNITED NATIONS Secretariat appointments - US debt pledge 41474
UNITED STATES Inauguration of Clinton - Continued controversy over campaign finance - Progress of Paula Jones sexual harassment case - Re-election of Newt Gingrich as Speaker of the House - Reprimanding of Newt Gingrich - Commencement of Supreme Court euthanasia appeal 41435
URUGUAY Constitutional reform 41440
UZBEKISTAN Law on political parties 41452
VIETNAM Imposition of death sentences in corruption cases 41450
WAR CRIMES Collapse of Serafinowicz trial - Supreme court ruling against Papon
YEMEN Islah boycott of budget debate 41473
YUGOSLAVIA Continuing protests - Further maneuvering over election results 41454
ZAÏRE Loss of momentum in eastern rebellion - Government's use of foreign 41431

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INDEX
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Volume 43 (XXXXIII) UK ISSN 0950-6128

A

Abacha, Gen. Sani, 41434, 41481, 41528, 41625, 41672, 41712, 41723, 41763, 41849, 41899, 41945, 41950
Abanda, Joseph Tsanga, 41946
Abat, Fortunato, 41451, 41824
Abbar, Abdul-Rahman al-, 41983
Abbas, Abdullah Fadil, 41472
Abbas, Mahmoud (Abu Mazan), 41469, 41518, 41565, 41614, 41713, 41840, 41890, 41939
Abbasov, Namiq, 41510
Abbgasbeyli, Siruz, 41754
Abbott, Roderick, 41831
Abdón Saguier, Miguel, 41811
Abdailahi, Aboubacar, 41948
Abdallah, Hussein, 41579
Abdallah, Mouzaoir, 41805, 41948
Abdel-Ghani, Abdel Aziz, 41663
Abdel-Shafi, Haider, 41891
Abdeljelil, Dah Ould, 41433
Abderrahman, Ahmed Abdallah, 41674
Abdillahi, Mohammed Barkat, 41950
Abdimomunov, Karimsher, 41589
Abdolalizadeh, Ali, 41792
Abdou, Nourdine Ahmed, 41948
Abdoulaye, Mariama Sambo, 41673, 41945
Abdoulkader Bamakhrama, Rifki, 41950
Abdulatipov, Ramazan, 41786
Abdullah ibn Abdul Aziz, Crown Prince, 41756, 41794, 41981, 41985
Abdullah, Farooq, 41448
Abdullah, Yusuf bin Alawi bin, 41981
Abdullojonov, Abdulmalik, 41636
Abel, Brig.-Gen. David, 41915, 41963
Abessole, Fr Paul Mba, 41435
Abety, Peter, 41946
Abhisit, Vejjajiva, 41916
Abiola, Chief Moshood "MKO", 41528, 41849, 41899, 41945
Abtahi, Mohammed Ali, 41793
Abu Bakar, Siti Zainab, 41685
Abu Marzuk, Musa, 41663
Abushi, Col. Munir al-, 41794
Acedera, Gen. Arnulfo, 41962
Achalov, Vladislav, 41753
Acharya, Ram Krishna, 41449, 41544, 41864, 41964
Adachi, Masao, 41754
Adada, Rodolphe, 41896
Adam II von und zu Liechtenstein, Prince Hans, 41554
Adamchuk, Anatoly, 41785
Adami, Mohamed, 41712
Adamishin, Anatoly, 41786
Adamkus, Valdas, 41976
Adams, Gerry, 41516, 41648, 41699, 41744, 41781, 41886, 41970
Adatch, Masada, 41567
Adda, Abdelkrim Ould, 41616
Adede, Andronico, 41477
Adeng, Amos, 41645
Adhikari, Bharat Moham, 41820
Adisa, Maj.-Gen. Adbulkarim, 41945
Adjahénot, Jacques, 41480
Adjoudji, Hamadjoda, 41946
Adli, Abib al-, 41935
Adongo, Ambrose, 41851
Adoum, Adnan, 41566
Advani, L. K., 41820
Afewerki, Issaias, 41673, 41720, 41761
Agalets, Valyantsin, 41458
Agar, Mehmet, 41462
Agiwa, Herrowa, 41968
Agladze, Tamaz, 41660
Aglieri, Pietro, 41697, 41829
Aguado, Martin, 41683
Ahern, Bertie, 41649, 41698, 41827, 41886
Ahern, Dermot, 41699
Ahizoune, Abdessalem, 41796
Ahmad, Ougoure Kifle, 41950
Ahmad, Rashid, 41740
Ahmar, Shaikh Abdullah bin Hussein al-, 41473
Ahmed, Afsar Uddin, 41500
Ahmed, Buba, 41946
Ahmed, Hocine Ait, 41664
Ahmed, Kazi Zafar, 41739
Ahmed, Lemerabott Sidi Mahmoud Ould Cheikh, 41433
Ahmed, Mohamed Lemine Ould, 41944
Ahmed, Rabet Sidi Mahmoud Ould Cheikh, 41804, 41944
Ahmed, Shamshad, 41691, 41819
Ahmet, Yahaya, 41546
Ahn Byung Young, 41537
Aichi, Kazuo, 41736
Aime, Jean-Claude, 41474
Aitken, Jonathan, 41699
Ajasin, Michael Adekunle, 41849
Ajez, Saeb, 41940
Akande, O., 41946
Akashi, Yasushi, 41474
Akayesu, Jean-Paul, 41431, 41622
Akayev, Askar, 41588, 41589, 41694, 41738, 41741
Akhmadov, Nadyr, 41754
Akhmedov, Lt.-Gen. Rustam, 41818
Akhond, Alhaj Mola Mohammad Hasan, 41866
Akiyama, Tomiichi, 41497
Akkharaserani, Narongchai, 41684
Akoitai, Sam, 41779, 41968
Akol, Lam, 41804
Akpandem, James, 41849
Aksenenko, Nikolai, 41609
Aktuna, Yildirim, 41604
Akwa, Abd al-Rahman al-, 41663
Al-Mahdi, Sadiq, 41433
Alagh, Yogendra K., 41587, 41691
Alamgir, Mohuiddin Khan, 41449
Alaoui, Moulay Ahmed, 41796
Alarcón de Quesada, Ricardo, 41769, 41858
Alarcón Rivera, Fabián, 41486, 41632, 41681, 41766, 41812
Alatas, Ali, 41685, 41734, 41963
Alawi, Khamees bin Mubarak Isa al-, 41981
Alawi, Mohammed bin Ali bin Nasir al-, 41981
Albert II, King of the Belgians, 41564
Albert, Pahimi Padacke, 41626, 41900
Albijanic, Spasoje, 41455
Albright, Madeleine, 41436, 41446, 41489, 41492, 41493, 41517, 41521, 41564, 41568, 41589, 41590, 41594, 41635, 41638, 41653, 41655, 41683, 41666, 41693, 41702, 41705, 41732, 41736, 41746, 41749, 41754, 41754, 41771, 41790, 41794, 41814, 41816, 41839, 41841, 41859, 41890, 41937, 41939, 41946, 41949, 41949, 41981
Alebua, Ezekiel, 41645
Aleksandrov, Serge, 41550
Aleksii II, 41753, 41709, 41837
Aleksovski, Zlatko, 41606
Alemán Lacayo, Arnoldo, 41442, 41631, 41729, 41810, 41814, 41856
Alesana, Tofilau Eti, 41548
Alewa, Baba Ould, 41434
Alex, David, 41735
Alfi, Hussein Mohammed al-, 41843, 41935
Algosaibi, Ghazi, 41841
Alho, Arja, 41887
Ali, Amadou, 41946
Ali, Cheikh Ould, 41944
Ali, Kaloma, 41946
Ali, Ramiz, 41876
Alier, Abel, 41482
Alik, Jaak, 41552
Aliko, Haxhi, 41557
Alimucaj, Vehbi, 41454, 41505
Alioua, Kaba Ould, 41944
Aliyev, Ali Akram, 41612
Aliyev, Geidar, 41510, 41612, 41660, 41711, 41754, 41788, 41836, 41878, 41922
Allegre, Claude, 41695
Allen, Algernon S.P.B., 41536
Allen, George, 41902
Allen, William, C., 41536
Allende, Salvador, 41811, 41858
Allon, Yigal, 41713
Almeida Bosque, Juan, 41858
Almeyda Medina, Clodomiro, 41811
Almunia, Joaquín, 41698
Aloi, Francesco, 41783
Alpi, Ilaria, 41783
Alston, Richard, 41824
Alvárez, Carlos, 41857
Alvárez-Montalvan, Emilio, 41442
Alvarado, José Antonio, 41442

Note: Page numbers given refer only to the *first* mention of a person in the article concerned; further references may occur within the same article.

Alyanchikov, Aleksandr, 41694
Alzarac, Cardinal Vargas, 41681
Amar, Mohammed Ould, 41482
Amara Bangali, Joe, 41724
Amegah, Atsu Koffi, 41759, 41800
Amer, Muhammad Zakil Abu, 41755
Amin, Youssef, 41612
Amir, Yigal, 41937
Ammerman, Bert, 41891
Amnuai, Wirawan, 41501, 41545, 41684
Amory, Nevis Premier Vance, 41490
Amory, Vance, 41859
Amour, Salmin, 41950
Amrat, Bachir, 41712
Anamegui, Aghali, 41673
Anani, Jawad, 41566
Ananiev, Georgi, 41506, 41653
Ananyev, Yevgeny, 41786
Ancram, Michael, 41467
Andeang, Kennan Ranibok, 41502
Anderson, David, 41679
Anderson, John, 41824
Anderson, Ronald, 41675
Anderson, Stephen, 41502
Andican, Shat, 41703
Andoni, Col. Aleks, 41789
Andrade, Alberto, 41811
Andreatta, Beniamino, 41790
Andreotti, Giulio, 41783
Andresen, Edmund, 41502
Andrews, David, 41699, 41886, 41886
Andrews, Henry, 41625
Andriamanjato, Ny Hasina, 41579
Andriamifidimanana, Lina, 41579
Andrianarivo, Tantely, 41579
Angara, Edgardo, 41686
Angarski, Krasimir, 41558
Angatia, Joshua, 41432
Angelevich, Arkady, 41708
Angelsen, Peter, 41881
Anglade, Jean-Jacques, 41514
Angula, Eddy, 41669
Ani, Chief Anthony Asuquo, 41434, 41899, 41946
Annabi, Hedi, 41474
Annadif, Mahamat-Saleh, 41626
Annan, Kofi, 41474, 41477, 41480, 41527, 41568, 41570, 41614, 41666, 41671, 41680, 41702, 41715, 41717, 41721, 41723, 41746, 41757, 41759, 41800, 41818, 41844, 41845, 41848, 41913, 41980
Ansari, Anis, 41449
Antanovich, Ivan, 41458, 41785
Anthony, Kenny, 41634
Antonescu, Crin, 41977
Antonio, Joseph, 41546
Antulay, A.R., 41637
Anwar Ibrahim, 41823, 41869, 41643, 41685, 41918, 41962
Anwar, Khalid, 41587
Aoki, Morihisa, 41632
Aoun, Gen. Michel, 41982
Apostoli, Gaqo, 41748
Applewhite, Marshall Herff, 41531
Aquino, Corazon, 41824
Arab, Brig. Husain Muhammed, 41663, 41936
Arafat, Mussa, 41940
Arafat, Yassir, 41469, 41518, 41564, 41566, 41614, 41662, 41714, 41794, 41831, 41839, 41841, 41890, 41939, 41985
Aranburu, Eugenio, 40966, 41513
Arancibia, Vice-Adml. Jorge Patricio, 41858
Aranda, José, 41649
Aranzamendi, José María, 41513
Ararktsyan, Babken, 41711
Araujo, Miguel, 41635
Arbel, Edna, 41613
Arbnori, Pjeter, 41835, 41876
Arboleda, Saulo, 41767
Arce-Garcia, Sylvia, 41952
Archer, Bill, 41437
Ardzinba, Vladislav, 41611, 41710, 41787
Aref, Mohammed Reza, 41792
Argaña, Luis María, 41488, 41811
Arias, Ricardo, 41442
Aristide, Jean Bertrand, 41364, 41586, 41633, 41682, 41956
Arlacchi, Pino, 41913
Armey, Dick, 41437, 41726
Arnstad, Marit, 41881
Aro, Tiiu, 41552
Arpan, Sahar, 41685
Arsanov, Vakha, 41787
Arteaga, Rosalia, 41486, 41487
Arthuis, Jean, 41464
Artyukhov, Vitaly, 41609
Arul, Peter, 41968
Arunachalam, M., 41586, 41636, 41691
Arzú Irigoyen, Alvaro, 41729, 41809, 41814
Arzalluz, Xabier, 41513, 41827
Asbrink, Erik, 41599, 41882
Asfour, Hassan, 41891
Ashdown, Paddy, 41744
Ashok Kumar Rai, 41544
Ashraff, M.H.M., 41692
Asik, Eyup, 41703
Assad, Hafez al-, 41471, 41519, 41662, 41715, 41793, 41795, 41840
Astiz, Alfredo, 41532
Asturias, Rodrigo, 41681, 41687, 41809
Asvat, Dr Abu Baker, 41802, 41898
Ateluye, Gareth, 41849
Athithao, Dhanushkodi, 41636
Ato, Osman Ali, 41432, 41627, 41900
Atopare, Silas, 41920
Atris, Mohamed, 41612
Attaf, Ahmed, 41616, 41712
Auali, Vincent, 41968
Aubry, Martine, 41695, 41782, 41828
Aufi, Hamid bin Said al-, 41981
Aumanu, Steve, 41779
Aung Htwe, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Aung Phone, U, 41915
Aung San Suu Kyi, 41776, 41821, 41870, 41963, 41501, 41684
Aung San, U, 41915, 41963
Aung Shwe, 41776
Aung Thaung, U, 41915
Aung Ye Kyaw, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Aure, Aud Inger, 41881
Ava Eworo, Basilio, 41723
Avei, Moi, 41548
Avramovic, Dragoslav, 41454
Avril, Liam, 41970
Axworthy, Lloyd, 41442, 41679
Ayala Lasso, José, 41812
Ayatskov, Dmitry, 41457
Aydid, Hussein Mohammed, 41432, 41579, 41627, 41900, 41949
Aye Thaung, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Ayessa, Fulmin, 41896
Ayinla, Rear-Adml Jubril O., 41946
Aykut, Imren, 41702
Ayob, Megat Junid, 41643
Ayumba, Honoré Ngabada Nzambo Ko, 41477
Ayyash, Yahya, 41470
Azam, Azam, 41841
Azika, Maj.-Gen. Patrick, 41946
Azimov, Araz, 41551
Aziz, Sartaj, 41499, 41543, 41692, 41866
Aziz, Tariq, 41519, 41613, 41652, 41888, 41938, 41980
Azizi, Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Matar al-, 41981
Aznar, José Maria, 41742, 41827
Azziman, Omar, 41796

B

Bánzer Suárez, Gen. (retd) Hugo, 41768, 41955
Bédié, Henri Konan, 41950
Ba, Dia, 41944
Ba, Sileye, 41944
Baba, Amadou, 41946
Baba, Yussef Ismail, 41519
Babbitt, Bruce, 41902
Babichev, Vladimir, 41549
Babiuc, Victor, 41511
Baburin, Sergei, 41550
Baca, Raúl Baca, 41486
Baczkowski, Andrzej, 41380, 41460
Badal, Prakash Singh, 41499
Badal, Keshav Prasad, 41544
Badawi, Abdullah Ahmad, 41686
Badi, Mohammed Saeed al-, 41569
Badir, Iurie, 41710
Bagabandi, Natsagiyn, 41149, 41503, 41638, 41690
Bagapsh, Sergey, 41611
Bagaza, Jean Baptiste, 41526
Baglai, Marat, 41507
Bagosora, Theoneste, 41477
Bagratian, Hrand, 41711
Bahdankevich, Stanislaw, 41459
Bahri, Mabrouk, 41473
Baing, Andrew, 41548, 41779, 41920, 41967
Baird, Zoe, 41436
Baisagale, Mesake, 41779
Baishya, Birendra Prasad, 41587
Baja, Ferenc, 41554
Bajramovic, Miro, 41834
Baker, James, 41568, 41616, 41664, 41713, 41756, 41797, 41843
Baker, Nancy Kassebaum, 41952
Bakurdzhiev, Evgeniy, 41653
Balaguer Cabrera, José Ramón, 41858
Balala, Sheikh Khalid, 41720
Balasubramanian, S.R., 41636
Balayan, Kim, 41711
Balcerowicz, Leszek, 41872
Balconi, Gen. Julio, 41729
Balgymbayev, Nurlan, 41542, 41867
Balladares, Ernesto Pérez, 41810, 41814
Balsells, Edgar, 41491
Balu, T.R., 41587
Balushi, Ahmed ibn Suwaidan al-, 41981
Balza, Martín Antonio, 41532
Bambang, Trihatmodjo, 41918
Bambiza, Ivan, 41458, 41659, 41838
Banana, Rev. Canaan, 41478, 41623, 41722, 41802
Banda, Aleke, 41721
Banda, Hastings Kamuzu, 41435, 41721, 41897
Bandelj, Mirko, 41554
Bandoma, Paul, 41622
Banerjee, Mamata, 41964
Bang Van Le, 41643
Bangali, Joe Amara, 41944
Bangura, David, 41944
Bangura, Kandeh, 41944
Bangura, Paolo, 41724, 41944
Bani Sadr, Abolhasan, 41612
Banotti, Mary, 41886
Banuelos Orta, Jorge, 41766
Bao Dai, 41777
Bao Ge, 41912
Baqerian, Mohammed, 41793
Baquero, Gustavo, 41486, 41907
Bar-Illan, David, 41518, 41839
Bar-On, Roni, 41470, 41518, 41614, 41662
Barandéréka, Bernard, 41622
Baraq, Ehud, 41714
Barde, Laokein, 41578, 41626
Baril, Lt.-Gen. Maurice, 41809
Barkhudaryan, Levon, 41661
Barnala, Surjit Singh, 41775
Barnard, Lance, 41824
Barnard, Nicholas, 41431
Barnes, Steven Jungarryi, 41967
Baro, Soma, 41672
Barreto, Nicandro Pereira, 41673
Barrett, David M., 41952
Barrio, Carmelo, 41602
Barrionuevo, José, 41883
Barrios Zelada, Gen. Héctor Mario, 41729, 41809
Barry, Hassan, 41804
Barry, Marion, 41902

Barshefsky, Charlene, 41522, 41531
Bartenstein, Wolfgang, 41465
Barter, Peter, 41548
Barzani, Masoud, 41651, 41877
Barzo, Abdulrahman, 41595
Basayev, Shamil, 41458, 41975
Baseskioglu, Murat, 41702
Bashir, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-, 41433, 41526, 41482, 41627, 41720, 41761, 41720, 41804, 41852, 41900
Bashiti, Farid, 41662
Basri, Driss, 41713, 41796, 41892, 41935
Bastarache, J. E. Michel, 41856
Bastola, Deepak Prasad, 41449
Batalli, Mehmet, 41703
Batani, Mohammad Abdullah al-, 41663
Batas, Artur, 41460
Batura, Barys, 41458
Baturin, Yury, 41507, 41786
Bauer, Odin, 41768
Bautista, José Fernando, 41767
Bawayz, Faris, 41519
Bayaganakandi, Epitace, 41526
Bayani, Siavash, 41843
Bayer, S., 41690
Bayili, Daouda, 41672
Bayiyezako, Grégoire, 41622
Baz, Osama, al-, 41713
Beassoumal, Nadjita, 41626
Beattie, Richard, 41702
Becerra, Carlos Medelln, 41583
Beck, Kurt, 41599
Beckett, Margaret, 41647
Bedaya, François Djader, 41481
Bedoya Pizarro, Gen. Harold, 41731, 41767
Beebeejaun, Ahmed Rashid, 41721
Beg, Dil Sad, 41692
Beg, Mirza Dilsad, 41864
Begin, Binyamin, 41470, 41755
Beilin, Yossi, 41714, 41937
Beiras, Xosé Manuel, 41884
Bejaxhiu, Agnes Goinxha, 41820
Belíz, Gustavo, 41730
Belaib, Bakhti, 41712
Belaid, Slaheddine, 41891
Belayat, Abderahmane, 41712
Belfkih, Abdelaziz Meziane, 41796
Belhadj, Ali, 41756
Belka, Marek, 41510
Bell, Martin, 41646, 41744
Bell, Rodger, 41700
Bello Bouba, Maigari, 41946
Belonogov, Anatoly, 41550
Belov, Yevgeniy, 41694
Beltaji, Ael, 41566
Belyayev, Sergei, 41786, 41837
Belyk, Alyaksandr, 41458
Ben Abdallah, Moncef, 41891
Ben Ali, Zine al-Abidine, 41891
Ben Ami, Shlomo, 41714
Ben, Bella, Ahmed, 41664
Ben Khadra, Amina, 41797
Ben Mansour, Abdelfettah, 41797
Ben Mokhtar, Rachid, 41796
Ben Mustafa, Said, 41891
Ben-Yair, Michael, 41471
Benaissa, Loubna, 41601
Benalia, Boulahouadjeb, 41712
Benarous, Zahia, 41712
Benegas, José María, 41884
Beneke, Johan, 41430
Bengrina, Abdelkader, 41712
Benhamouda, Abdelhak, 41473, 41521, 41568
Benhima, Driss, 41796
Benmansour, Mustapha, 41712
Bennani, Aziza, 41797
Bennett, Robert, 41675, 41726, 41853, 41902
Benouzid, Boubeker, 41712
Bensalah, Abdelkader, 41664, 41712, 41796
Benslimane, Ahmed, 41712
Berdymuhamedov, Gurbanguli, 41966
Berenger, Paul Raymond, 41674, 41721
Berezovsky, Boris, 41610, 41752, 41786, 41836, 41920, 41974
Bergauer, Anton, 41554
Berger, David, 41890
Berger, Hans, 41560
Berger, Sandy, 41877
Bergier, Franois, 41512
Berisha, Sali, 41505, 41556, 41596, 41597, 41653, 41703, 41747, 41789, 41876
Berlusconi, Paolo, 41465
Berlusconi, Silvio, 41465, 41513, 41972
Bernal, Jaime, 41533
Bernal, Julio Enrique Acosta, 41583
Bernardo Vieira, Joao, 41673, 41483
Bernevig, Col. Cristian Dumitru, 41791
Bernik, Joze, 41932
Berre, André Dieudonné, 41480
Berri, Nabi, 41888
Bertini, Catherine, 41539, 41737
Bertinotti, Fausto, 41598, 41828, 41883
Beshari, Ahmed Ali al-, 41664
Betzeti, Abdelmenaf, 41654
Beu, Fr Brown, 41502
Bey, Said, 41892
Beyer, Donald, 41902
Bhandari, Prem Bahadur, 41449, 41544, 41820, 41964
Bhandari, Romesh, 41864
Bhandari, Sharat Singh, 41864, 41964
Bharihoke, Ajit, 41691
Bhattarai, Krishna Prasad, 41964
Bheenick, Rundheersing, 41721
Bhichai, Rattakul, 41916
Bhumibol Adulyadej, King, 41734, 41777, 41916
Bhutto, Benazir, 41365, 41447, 41498, 41543, 41587, 41692, 41740, 41819, 41865
Bhutto, Murtaza, 41278, 41411, 41448, 41691, 41740
Bhutto, Nusrat, 41819
Bid, Ali Salim al-, 41756
Bidhya Devi Bhandari, 41544
Biedenkopf, Kurt, 41599
Bifarini, Hidalgo, 41486
Bigawa, Samuel, 41622
Bikinkita, Col. Philippe, 41801
Biko, Steve, 41430, 41802
Bildt, Carl, 41704, 41784
Biloblotsky, Mykola, 41752
Bintang Pamungkas, Sri, 41547
Birara, Jean-Berkmans, 41851
Bird Jr, Vere, 41957
Bird, Lester, 41957
Birendra, King, 41864, 41964
Birkavs, Valdis, 41510, 41785
Birma, Dauda, 41946
Biron, Rodrigue, 41532
Biryukov, Vadim, 41507
Biryukov, Vladimir, 41457
Bishara, Ahmad, 41664
Bishop, Maurice, 41769
Bisikuabo, Tshubaka, 41669
Bitaraf, Habibollah, 41792
Bitsindou, Gerard, 41896
Biu, Zachary, 41625
Biwott, Nicholas K., 41432
Biya, Paul, 41483, 41576, 41624, 41849, 41946
Bizhan, Col.-Gen. Ivan, 41879
Bizimana, Deogratias, 41431
Bizimungu, Augustin, 41525
Bizimungu, Pasteur, 41851, 41897
Blüm, Norbert, 41464
Blackbeard, Roy, 41803
Blagoev, Vesselin, 41558
Blair, Tony, 41600, 41646, 41651, 41680, 41699, 41700, 41717, 41732, 41744, 41744, 41780, 41795, 41827, 41886, 41886, 41925, 41933, 41936, 41937, 41969, 41970
Blanc, Christian, 41828
Blanco, Miguel Angel, 41741, 41783, 41827
Bland, Tony, 41562
Blaskic, Tihomir, 41704
Blattman Bauer, René, 41491
Bloch, Rolf, 41612
Blocher, Christoph, 41554
Blondel, Marc, 41884
Blunkett, David, 41646, 41969
Bobeva, Daniela, 41506
Bochkaryov, Yury, 41660
Bode, Ridvan, 41505, 41876
Bogomolov, Oleg, 41457
Bohman, Gosta, 41784
Bohra, Amrit Kumar, 41544
Boignbeya, Lt.-Cdr., 41576
Bojang, Momdou, 41529
Bokhari, Fasih, 41636
Bokovikov, Aleksandr, 41550
Bolanos, Enrique, 41442
Boldvai, Laszlo, 41706
Bole, Filipe, 41779
Boley, George, 41434, 41528, 41625
Bolger, Jim, 41919, 41967
Boli, Yero, 41671
Bolkiah, Prince Jefri, 41595
Bolkiah, Sultan Hassanal, 41595
Boloña Bohr, Carlos, 41811
Bolshakov, Aleksandr, 41549
Bommai, S.R., 41587
Bondevik, Kjell Magne, 41830, 41881
Bonett, Gen. Manuel José, 41731
Bonev, Bogomil, 41506, 41558, 41653
Bongo, Omar, 41671, 41723, 41759, 41801
Boni-Claverie, Danielle, 41760
Bonilla, Jamilet, 41442
Bonino, Emma, 41477, 41517, 41603
Bonior, David, 41437
Bonkougou, Juliette, 41672
Bonkoungou (nee Ouedraogo), Viviane Yolande, 41672
Bonnet, Gen. Manuel José, 41681, 41810, 41857
Boolell, Arvin, 41721
Boothroyd, Betty, 41648
Boraine, Alex, 41670
Borgognon, Juan Alfonso, 41732
Borong, Zhou, 41590
Bory, Brig.-Gen., Jean-Paul, 41579
Bose, Isimeli, 41779
Boseto, Leslie, 41779
Bosic, Boro, 41455
Bossi, Umberto, 41513, 41697, 41829
Bostwick, Janet G., 41536
Bota, Liviu, 41753, 41922
Botez, Sorin, 41977
Botha, P. W., 41802
Botha, P.W., 41623
Botha, Roelof "Pik", 41850
Boube, Oumarou, 41673, 41945
Bouchard, Lucien, 41532, 41581, 41630, 41808
Boudria, Don, 41679
Boughaba, Rabeh, 41892
Bougou, Khadijatou Bint, 41944
Bouh, Yacin Elmi, 41950
Boukar, Maï Manga, 41673
Boukar, Mai Manga, 41945
Boukoubi, Faustin, 41480
Boula, Rissa ag, 41945
Boulekone, Vincent, 41825, 41871
Boumba, Pierre Damien Boussoukou, 41896
Bounekraf, Abdelkader, 41712
Bourhane, Nourdine, 41948
Bourne, Peter, 41536
Bouterse, Desiré "Desi", 41534
Boutros Ghali, Yusuf, 41755
Boutros-Ghali, Boutros, 41424, 41474, 41567, 41715, 41940
Bouygues, Martin, 41514
Bouyiki, Jean Rémy Pendy, 41480
Bowen, Hezekiah, 41625
Bowles, Erskine, 41579
Boyadzhiev, Petur, 41653
Boyer, Paul, 41893
Boyka, Uladzimir, 41458
Boyko, Maksim, 41785, 41920

Boyle, Gen. Jean, 41728, 41809
Bozhkov, Aleksandur, 41506, 41653
Bozovic, Srdja, 41705, 41748
Bradford, Max, 41967
Bradley, Pat, 41648
Brah, Mahamane, 41673
Brahimi, Lakhdar, 41938, 41966
Brahiti, Ali, 41712
Braithwaite, Tunji, 41899
Brandao, André Luis, 41575
Brandao, Carlos Pinho, 41673
Brandeis, Louis, 41765
Brandon, Victor, 41724, 41944
Brandt, David, 41769
Bravo, Tito Manglio Rincón, 41683
Brazauskas, Algirdas, 41510, 41839, 41881, 41924, 41976, 41924
Brennan, William Joseph, 41727
Bridgewater, Carl, 41515
Bridgland, Fred, 41802, 41898
Bright, Charles, 41760
Brincat, Leo, 41559
Briones, Juan, 41582
Brittan, Leon, 41536
Brokaj, Sabit, 41748, 41789, 41877
Bromwich, Michael, 41581
Bronevich, Valentina, 41457
Brou, Emile Atta Amoakon, 41760
Brown, Gordon, 41562, 41646, 41699, 41744, 41885, 41925, 41969
Brown, Nick, 41647, 41781
Brown, Nicole, 41485
Brown, Ronald, 41952
Brown, Stephen, 41562
Browning, Dolly, 41854
Bruckner, Ion Victor, 41977
Bruder, Thomas, 41808
Brundtland, Gro Harlem, 41515
Bruton, John, 41648, 41649, 41698
Bucak, Sedat, 41389, 41462
Bucaram Ortíz, Abdalá, 41486, 41487, 41583, 41632
Budd, Alan, 41699
Buddhi Ram Tamang, 41544
Budisa, Drazen, 41979
Bue, Samson, 41645
Buendia, Fidel Jaramillo, 41487
Buffet, Marie-George, 41695
Bufi, Ylli, 41748
Buha, Aleksa, 41748
Buiter, Willem, 41699
Bulatovic, Momir, 41455, 41555, 41748, 41790, 41875
Bulatovic, Pavle, 41555
Bulgak, Vladimir, 41549
Bulic, Nico, 41834
Bunwaree, Vasant Kumar, 41721
Burke, Ray, 41699, 41781, 41827, 41886
Burmeister, James N., 41486, 41532
Burnette, Samuel, 41760
Burns, Nicholas, 41430, 41503
Burton, Dan, 41530
Busaidi, Ali bin Hamud Ali al-, 41981
Busaidi, Saud bin Ibrahim bin Saud al-, 41981
Busaidi, Sayyid al-Motassem ibn Hamud al-, 41981
Busaidi, Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Hareb al-, 41981
Busaidi, Sayyid Mussallam bin Ali al-, 41981
Bush, George, 41530, 41677
Bush, Mckeeva, 41859
Bustani, José, 41797
Buthelezi, Chief Mangosuthu, 41430, 41623, 41722, 41758
Butler, Richard, 41661, 41888, 41938, 41980
Butov, Vladimir, 41457
Buwei, Malami, 41946
Buyoya, Pierre, 41478, 41526, 41574, 41669, 41762, 41801
Buzek, Jerzy, 41872, 41930
Buzlevski, Dimitar, 41654
Bwanali, Edward, 41721
Byrd, Robert, 41580
Byrne, Peter, 41550, 41659

C

Cárdenas Solárzno, Cauhtémoc, 41728
Cárdenas, Gen. Lazaro, 41728
Cabezas, José Luis, 41440, 41584, 41680
Cabezas, Lombardo Martínez, 41631
Cabrales, Orlando, 41767
Cabrisas, Ricardo, 41585
Cachalia, Azar, 41898
Cagan, Nami, 41702
Cagimaivei, Vilisoni, 41779
Cairns, Jim, 41825
Calabresi, Luigi, 26411, 41466
Calarca, Marcos León, 41631, 41810
Calderón Hinojosa, Felipe, 41441
Calderón Sol, Armando, 41814
Camacho Solís, Manuel, 41489
Camargo, Gen. Sergio, 41729
Camdessus, Michel, 41609, 41633
Cammarata, Joseph, 41806
Campa Huergo, Concepción, 41858
Campa, Roberto, 41728
Campos, Rueben, 41585
Campos, Wilson, 41488
Cani, Shkelqim, 41789
Cao Sy Kiem, 41868
Captan, Monie, 41724
Carcani, Adil, 41876
Cardenal, Jesús, 41649
Cardenas, Emilio, 41938
Cardoso, Fernando Henrique, 41439, 41488, 41532, 41584, 41633, 41679, 41810, 41857
Cardoso, Higino Lopes, 41673
Cardoso, Joao Gomes, 41673
Cardozo, Hilarion, 41534
Carey, Ronald, 41764
"Carlos the Jackal", see Ramiréz Sánchez, Illich
Carlot Korman, Maxime, 41645, 41920
Carlot, Louis, 41645
Carman, George, 41778
Carneiro, Emanuel Moreira, 41575
Carpenter McMillan, Susan, 41853
Carrera, Danilo, 41487
Carrera, Elsa, 41956
Carrillo Fuentes, Amado, 41729, 41904
Carrington, Walter, 41849
Carter, Jimmy, 41536, 41681, 41956
Cartolini, Néstor Cerpa, 41439, 41488, 41533, 41582
Caruana, Peter, 41462
Casas Regueiro, Gen. Julio, 41858
Caso, José Luis, 41970
Cassoulides, Yiannakis, 41462
Castello, José Barba, 41811
Castillo Meza, Gen. Tomás, 41731
Castillo, Herberto, 41582
Castro Ruz, Fidel, 41442, 41585, 41633, 41732, 41858, 41907, 41957
Castro, Raúl, 41442, 41731, 41858
Catli, Abdullah, 41462
Cato, Milton, 41537
Caushi, Myeteza, 41789
Cavallo, Domingo, 41584, 41680, 41730, 41857
Cavanaugh, Carey, 41462
Cavaubati, Viliame, 41779, 41920
Cebekhulu, Katiza, 41802, 41898
Cebuc, Ion, 41460, 41930
Ceesay, Ebrima, 41529
Ceesay-Sabally, Awa, 41529
Ceka, Neritan, 41748, 41789, 41876
Cela, Belul, 41557
Celebi, Isin, 41703
Celmins, Juiris, 41510
Celmins, Juris, 41785
Cem, Ismail, 41702, 41789
Centeno, Julio, 41442
Cerar, Marjan, 41932
Cevallos, Guillermo Boggio, 41632
Cevers, Ziedonis, 41785, 41881
Chávez Frías, Lt-Col. (retd) Hugo, 41729
Ch'ien, Raymond, 41733
Chaari, Ali, 41568
Chady, Mohammed Siddick, 41721
Chaiyos, Sasomsap, 41916
Chako, Cherif, 41673, 41945
Chalabi, Ahmed, 41567
Chamari, Khemais, 440978, 41473
Chambalo, Kamangadazi, 41623, 41721
Chambers, George, 41907
Chambliss, Robert, 41727
Chambrier, Marcel Eloi Rahandi, 41480
Chamorro, Pedro Joaquín, 41442
Chamoun, Dory, 41754
Chan Chi-hsien, 41770
Chan Huo-sheng, 41770
Chan, Anson, 41493, 41733, 41814
Chan, Sir Julius, 41502, 41547, 41596, 41686, 41741
Chand, Lokendra Bahadur, 41544, 41692, 41820, 41864
Chandha, Win, 41500
Chandra, Harish, 41864
Chang Hsiao-yen, 41738, 41960, 41639, 41770
Chang King-yu, 41770
Chang Wun Tae, 41537
Chang Yu-hui, 41770
Chang Zheng, 41912
Chao Li-yun, 41770
Chao Shou-po, 41770, 41639
Chaouch, Ali, 41891
Chaovalit Yongchaiyut, Gen, 41545, 41595, 41642, 41684, 41734, 41777, 41821, 41868, 41915
Chapa Bezanilla, Pable, 41631
Charalambides, Andreas, 41929
Charest, Jean, 41581, 41678
Charikane, Ahmed, 41852
Charki, Said, 41934
Charles, Prince of Wales, 41732, 41780
Chasteau de Balyon, Marie Joseph Jacques, 41721
Chatchai Ia-Sakul, 41777
Chatichai Choonhaven, 41684, 41868, 41916
Chatikobo, Judge Esmael, 41948
Chatral Rinpoche, 41638
Chaturon Chaisang, 41777
Chaziya, Chakakala, 41721
Chea Sambath, Gen., 41733
Chea Sim, 41776, 41870
Chea, Daniel, 41760
Chedumbarum Pillay, Ramsamy, 41721
Chee Soon Juan, 41450
Chehem, Mohammed Musa, 41950
Chemjong Rakam, 41544
Chemysh, Volodymyr, 41508
Chen Chien-min, 41770
Chen Xiaotong, 41770, 41814
Chen Xitong, 41770, 41814
Chen, C.J., 41690
Cherep, Valery, 41752
Cherepkov, Viktor, 41975
Cherif, Mourad, 41796
Chernogorov, Aleksandr, 41457
Chernomyrdin, Viktor, 41507, 41549, 41607, 41610, 41658, 41659, 41690, 41753, 41785, 41839, 41842, 41867, 41880, 41881, 41916, 41921, 41973, 41974, 41978
Chesoni, Justice Zaccheus, 41900
Cheung, Anthony, 41638
Chevènement, Jean-Pierre, 41695, 41782
Chi Haotian, 41771, 41814, 41493
Chi'en, Raymond, 41447
Chiam See Tong, 41450
Chiang Chung-ling, Gen., 41770
Chiang Ping-kun, 41770
Chibana, Shoichi, 41591
Chibirov, Ludvig, 41922
Chichibaba, Visil, 41558
Chidambaram, P., 41543, 41586, 41636
Chiduo, Aaron, 41478
Chikane, Frank, 41898
Chikowore, Enos, 41722
Chiluba, Frederick, 41576, 41758, 41801, 41851, 41897, 41948

Chilumpha, Cassim, 41721
Chimutengwende, Chen, 41722
Chin Hsiao-yi, 41770
Chin Yom, 41537
Chinamasa, Patrick, 41722
Chingchai Mongkhontham, 41777
Chipawa, Anosh, 41948
Chipeta, Mapopa, 41721
Chirac, Jacques, 41445, 41463, 41492,41514, 41521, 41563, 41601, 41637, 41649, 41671, 41694, 41742, 41757, 41762, 41782, 41887, 41916, 41917, 41927, 41941, 41971, 41980
Chissano, Joaquim, 41950
Chit Swe, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Chitalo, Edda, 41721
Chiu, Paul, 41770
Chkuaseli, Mikhail, 41660
Cho Aung Than, 41776
Cho Chong Chi, 41773
Cho Hae Nyoung, 41773, 41537
Cho Myong Nok, 41495, 41593
Choe Kwang, Marshalll, 40773, 41495, 41773
Choi Sang Yup, 41537
Chombo, Ignatius, 41722
Chon Pong Kun, 41773
Chong Hae Chu, 41909
Chongwe, Roger, 41758
Choo Lei Oo, 41594
Chouk, Hassine, 41891
Chowdhury, Jyotidra Mohan, 41692
Chowdhury, Renuka, 41691
Chowdry, Matia, 41448
Chowdury, Samar, 41499
Chowdury, Syeda Sajeda, 41448
Chrétien, Jean, 41581, 41630, 41678, 41679, 41808
Christofi, Kyriacos, 41929
Christopher, Warren, 41470
Chu, James, 41770
Chu, Steven, 41893
Chu, Tuan Nha, 41822
Chuan Leekpai, 41916, 41963
Chub, Vladimir, 41457
Chubais, Anatoly, 41457, 41507, 41521, 41549, 41609, 41658, 41707, 41753, 41785, 41836, 41880, 41920, 41923, 41974
Chumakow, Alyaksandr, 41458, 41976
Chumphol Silpa-Archa, 41916
Chun Doo Hwan, 41817, 41958, 41592
Chung Bo Kun, 41688
Chung Jae Chull, 41496
Chung Jong Taeck, 41537
Chung Shui-ming, 41733
Chung Sze-yuen, Sir, 41733
Chung Tai Soo, 41444, 41496, 41592, 41688
Cicak, Ivan Zvonimir, 41791
Cienfuegos, Osmany, 41859
Ciller, Ozer, 41877
Ciller, Tansu, 41462, 41511, 41604, 41652, 41702, 41746, 41877
Cimoszewicz, Wlodzimierz, 41553, 41608, 41792, 41872
Cintra Frías, Gen. Leopoldo, 41858
Ciobanu, Ceslav, 41710
Ciorbea, Victor, 41511, 41558, 41606, 41655, 41791, 41873, 41934, 41977
Cipolletta, Innocenzo, 41883
Cipriani, Juan Luis, 41533
Cisneros, Henry, 41952
Cissé, Soumaila, 41804
Cisse, Amadou Boubacar, 41433, 41579, 41673, 41804, 41899
Ciumara, Mircea, 41977
Claes, Willy, 41466
Clark, David, 41647
Clark, Gen. Wesley, 41874
Clark, Wesley, 41569
Clarke, Kenneth, 41467, 41600, 41647, 41700, 41835
Clerides, Glafkos, 41461, 41603, 41702, 41746, 41788, 41835, 41877, 41929
Clinton, Bill, 41435, 41436, 41440, 41442, 41470, 41475, 41483, 41489, 41492, 41517, 41522, 41529, 41534, 41538, 41564, 41568, 41579, 41581, 41583, 41585, 41589, 41594, 41628, 41634, 41637, 41651, 41675, 41687, 41704, 41714, 41716, 41717, 41725, 41757, 41763, 41794, 41806, 41812, 41814, 41839, 41842, 41845, 41853, 41857, 41858, 41860, 41862, 41877, 41888, 41900, 41901, 41911, 41912, 41937, 41938, 41951, 41960, 41973, 41978, 41980
Clinton, Hillary, 41485, 41530, 41579, 41675, 41726
Co, Brandao Gomes, 41673
Coates, Ken, 41885
Cochinescu, Nicolae, 41791
Cochran, Johnnie, 41581
Coe, Terry, 41872
Coelho, Jorge, 41926
Coelho, Nilo, 41811
Cofferati, Sergio, 41513
Cohen, William S., 41436, 41517, 41568, 41591, 41594, 41629, 41676, 41771, 41816, 41888, 41912, 41938, 41951
Cohen-Tannoudji, Claude, 41893
Cokrevski, Tomislav, 41654
Cole, James, 41437
Colic, Gen. Pero, 41790, 41834
Collenette, David, 41679
Collenette, Penny, 41809
Collins, Lt. Eldred, 41944
Collins, Michael, 41886
Colomé Ibarra, Gen. Abelardo, 41858
Colomberg, Dominique, 41604
Compaoré, Blaise, 41481, 41671
Comtemplacion, Flor, 40457, 41686
Conde, Goureissy, 41899
Conde, Mario, 41561
Connerly, Ward, 41764
Connor, Jean, 41629
Connor, Joseph, 41474
Constantine, King, 41698
Constantinescu, Emil, 41376, 41461, 41655, 41705, 41791, 41876, 41977
Conte, Lansana, 41481, 41577, 41899, 41945
Cook, Robin, 41646, 41666, 41732, 41742, 41749, 41769, 41780, 41797, 41823, 41841, 41865, 41971, 41984
Cooray, B. Sirisena, 41693
Copani, Adem, 41557
Copani, Maj.-Gen. Adem, 41789
Copps, Sheila, 41679
Corach, Carlos, 41680
Corbeil, Pierre, 41856
Cordovez, Diego, 41746, 41788, 41929
Corll, Hans, 41474
Corrales Alvárez, Arturo, 41904, 41953
Correia, Carlos, 41673, 41850
Cortés, Ana María, 41768
Cosma, Miron, 41461
Costa, Antonio, 41926
Costello, Peter, 41644
Cotti, Flavio, 41461, 41512, 41666, 41976
Coulibaly, Boubacar Karamoko, 41804
Coulibaly, Mamadou, 41944
Coulibaly, Ousmane, 41944
Covas, Mário, 41811
Cowan, Brian, 41699
Cox, Anna, 41885
Cozma, Miron, 41706
Creanga, Maj.-Gen. Pavel, 41879
Creech, Wyatt, 41967
Crespo, Jorge, 41768
Cresson, Edith, 41754
Cristiano, Joana Lina Ramos Baptista, 41576
Cristo, Jorge, 41767
Crivelli, Carlo, 41465
Crouch, Gen. William, 41749
Cruz León, Raúl Ernesto, 41812
Crvenovski, Branko, 41654
Cuéllar, Jorge Madrazo, 41489, 41631
Cuadra, Jaime, 41442
Cucalon, Francisco, 41681
Cuesta, Jesús Agustín, 41463
Culi, Leonard, 41748
Cunningham, Jack, 41647, 41969
Czarnecki, Ryszard, 41872

D

Da Chala, Marcial, 41480
Da Costa, Manuel Saturnino, 41673
da Motta, Sergio Vieira, 41633, 41811, 41857
da Silva Moura, Venancio, 41575
da Silva Neto, Antonio, 41575
Da Silva, Avito José, 41373
Da Silva, Fernando Delfim, 41673
da Silva, Luis Inácio "Lula", 41679, 41729, 41810, 41857, 41954
Daach, Osman Robleh, 41950
Dabire, Christophe, 41672
Dade, Arta, 41748
Dafei, Abdullah Hussain al-, 41664
Dager, Misael Enamorado, 41858
Dagli, Halit, 41604
Dahl, Harry, 41512
Dahlan, Mohammed, 41565, 41940
Dahmane, Mohammed Mahmoud Ould, 41434
Dai Xianglong, 41960
Daianu, Daniel, 41977
Dairou, Sali, 41946
Dalai Lama, see Gyatso, Tenzin
D'Alema, Massimo, 41465, 41513
Daley, William, 41485, 41965
Dalgalyow, Vasil, 41458
Dalhatu, Bashir, 41946
Dalyell, Tam, 41780
Dambezet, Charles, 41896
Dana, see Scallan, Rosemary
Dang Vu Chu, 41822
Daniel, Yuly, 41508
Dankevych, Ivan, 41660
Daoud, Ali Mohammed, 41950
Daoussa, Bichara Cherif, 41626
Daqamsa, Ahmed al-, 41566, 41714, 41755, 41841
Dar, Abdul Majid, 41544
Dar, Mohammad Maqbool, 41587, 41636
Dar, Muhammed Ishaq, 41499
Darabi, Kazem, 41612
Darawshi, Abdul-Wahab, 41713
Darbinyan, Armen, 41661, 41711
Darboe, Ousainou, 41434
Dargel, Volga, 41458
Darkinah, Fineboy, 41760
Darling, Alistair, 41647
Daschle, Tom, 41437
Dash-Yondon, Budragchaagyn, 41690
Dassault, Serge, 41696
Dastanka, Anatol, 41458
Dau, Joshua, 41482
Dávalos, Armando Hart, 41490
Davalos, Carlos, 41486, 41681
David, James Burty, 41721
Davies, Quentin, 41925
Davies, Ron, 41647, 41827
Davies, Samuel Beccles, 41672
Davies, Sharron, 41830
Davis, David, 41468
Davis, Gilbert, 41629, 41806
Davis, Lanny, 41579
Davlos, Carlos, 41766
Davydov, Oleg, 41549
Dawalibi, Fu'ad al-, 41755
Dawel, Akoli, 41673
de Alcantra Monteiro, Mario, 41575
de Assis, Albina Faria, 41575
de Barranger, Olivier, 41828
de Beer, Sam, 41802
de Castro, José da Rocha, 41576
de Charette, Hervé, 41445, 41503, 41527
de Chastelain, Gen. John, 41728, 41781, 41826
De Clerck, Stefaan, 41696
de Fatima Monteiro Jardim, Maria, 41575

de Franco, Cario, 41442
de Gante, Margarita Mariscal, 41463
de Gaulle, Charles, 41561, 41893
de Guzman, Michael, 41869
de Klerk, F.W., 41623, 41670, 41758, 41802
de Kock, Eugene, 41623
de la Fuente, Carlos Lleras, 41042, 41583
de la Rosa, Eduardo, 41533
de la Torre, Asdrubal, 41681
de León, Oscar Malherbe, 41489
de Lozada, Gonzálo Sánchez, 41491
de Maria y Campos, Mauricio, 41618
de Melgar, Nora, 41953
de Oliveira, Ana Maria, 41576
de Palacio de Valle-Lersundi, Loyola, 41649
de Rato, Rodrigo, 41602
De Silva, Nimal Siripala, 41692
de Soto, Alvar, 41474
de Tarso Venceslau, Paulo, 41679
De Valera, Síle, 41699
de Venecia, Jose, 41962
de Villa, Gen. Renato, 41735, 41778, 41824, 41962
de Viva, Gustavo Diaz, 41488
de Vroom, Christian, 41885
De Wet, Jan, 41430
Déby, Idriss, 41433, 41482, 41761, 41900
Decha, Sukharom, Navy Commander, 41916
Deerpalsingh, Nankeswarsingh, 41721
Dehaene, Jean-Luc, 41695, 41884
Deinekin, Gen. Pyotr, 41975
Dekamo, Mamadou, 41896
del Mazo, Alfredo, 41489, 41728
del Ponte, Carla, 41582
Dela Cruz, Nilo, 41870
Delalic, Zejnil, 41556
Delamere, Tuariki John, 41967
Delamuraz, Jean-Pascal, 41461
Delana, Lagisoa, 41779
DeLay, Tom, 41437, 41726
Delclaux, Cosmé, 41742
Delic, Hazim, 41556
Delinga, Pavol, 41931
Delo, Jean-Felix Demba, 41896
Demba, Sow Abou, 41434, 41673
Dementyeva, Natalya, 41786
Demirel, Suleyman, 41461, 41604, 41660, 41702, 41718, 41746, 41788, 41789, 41876, 41877
Dempsey, Noel, 41699
Demydenko, Arkady, 41611, 41710
Denard, Bob, 41674
Deng Xiansheng, 41491, 41495, 41689
Deng Xiaoping, 41770, 41813, 41445, 41540, 41491
Denis, Hervé, 41907, 41956
Denktash, Rauf, 41461, 41702, 41746, 41788, 41835, 41877, 41929, 41972
Der'i, Aryeh, 41471, 41614, 41662, 41755
Derby-Lewis, Clive, 41758
Derevyanko, Borys, 41787, 41838
Derouaz, Mohammed Aziz, 41712
Desai, Ashok, 41864
Desai, Nitin, 41474
Desai, Suresh, 41801, 41948
d'Estaing, Valery Giscard, 41630
Detanamo, Vinson, 41502
Deuba, Sher Bahadur, 41449, 41544
Devaty, Stanislav, 41553
Deve Gowda, H.D., 41448, 41543, 41586, 41636
Devereaux, Earl, 41536
Devesi, Sir Baddeley, 41779
Devi, Rabri, 41739, 41774, 41964
Devine, Andrew, 41563
Devkota, Chabiprasad, 41449
Dewar, Donald, 41647
Dhaheri, Mohammed Nakhira al-, 41569
Dhaliwal, Herb, 41679
Dhuka, Foto, 41557
di Celmo, Fabio, 41812
di Finanza, Guardi, 41388, 41421, 41465
Di Pietro, Antonio, 41465, 41928
di Rupo, Elio, 41421, 41466
di Tella, Mal-Guido, 41440
Diabaté, Amadou, 41804
Diaby, Mamadou Maribatrou, 41626
Diacov, Dumitru, 41509
Diaderas, Fernando, 41582
Diakité, Yoro, 41761, 41804
Diallo, Aïssa Abdoulaye, 41673
Diallo, Ahmed El Madani, 41804
Diallo, Aissa Abdoulaye, 41945
Diallo, Alpha Ibrahim Mongo, 41899
Diallo, Cellou Dalen, 41899
Diallo, Mamadou Cellou, 41899
Diallo, Salif, 41671
Diamacoune Senghor, Fr Augustine, 41803
Diana, Princess of Wales, 41780, 41845, 41826
Diasseny, Dorank Assifat, 41899, 41899
Díaz Delmas, Gen. Oscar Rodrgio, 41906
Diaz, José, 41946
Díaz, Maximo Rivera, 41632
Dickey, Everett, 41677
Dicko, Younouss Hamaye, 41804
Didjob, Divungui-Di-Ndinge, 41671
Digombe, Lazare, 41480
Dijoud, Paul, 41897
Dilba, Roberts, 41510, 41707, 41751
Diller, Karl, 41927
Dimitrov, Spas, 41653
Dimitrov, Stefan, 41930
Dimitrova, Bistra, 41653
Dincmen, Yener, 41973
Ding Guangen, 41813
Dini, Lamberto, 41468, 41559, 41783, 41979
Diof, Jacques, 41817
Dion, Stephanie, 41679
Dissanayaka, D.M.S.B., 41692
Dissanayake, Berty Premanand, 41692
Diya, Lt.-Gen. Oladipo, 41945
Djajic, Novislav, 41654
Djibril, Abdallah Chirwa, 41950
Djibril, Ibrahim Idriss, 41950
Djidda, Ousman, 41626
Djindjic, Zoran, 41503, 41875
Djohar, Said Mohamed, 40716, 40761, 41674
Djombo, Henri, 41896
Djukanovic, Milo, 41501, 41555, 41748, 41790, 41875
Dlamini, Thulani, 41802
Dlouhy, Vladimir, 41656, 41706
Dmitriyeva, Tatyana, 41549
Do Muoi, 41734, 41822, 41868, 41961
Do Que Luong, 41867
Do Nguyen Phuong, 41822
Do Quang Trung, 41822
Dobrev, Nikolay, 41453, 41506
Dobson, Frank, 41646, 41647, 41969
Dodangoda, Amarasiri, 41692
Dogolea, Enoch, 41724
Dogra, S. S., 41820
Doike, Samuel Saye, 41945
Dokmanovic, Slavko, 41749
Dokuzovski, Kiro, 41654
Dole, Robert, 41580
Dologuélé, Georges, 41481
Domenach, Nicholas, 41927
Domenici, Pete V., 41437
Donald, Michael, 41677
Dontul, Vladimir, 41552
Donwahi, Charles, 41760
D'Orazio, Robert, 41515
Dorji, Rongthong Kuenley, 41588
Dorrell, Stephen, 41648, 41700
Dorri-Najafabadi, Hojatolislam Qorbanali, 41792
Dorum, Odd Einar, 41881
dos Santos, José Eduardo, 41480, 41576, 41671, 41723, 41848, 41850, 41899
dos Santos, Roosevelt Roque, 41439
Dostam, Gen. Abdul Rashid, 41451, 41500, 41542, 41588, 41635, 41693, 41819, 41866, 41913, 41966
Doualamou, Germain, 41899
Dourahame, Moussa, 41673, 41945
Dovzhenko, Valentyna, 41787
Dowiyogo, Bernard, 41502
Downer, Alexander, 41502
Downey, Sir Gordon, 41562, 41700, 41744, 41781, 41925
Drabo, Issiaka, 41672
Dragonja, Metod, 41554
Drame, Thiebile, 41761
Draskovic, Vuk, 41454, 41833
Drljaca, Simo, 41749
Drnovsek, Janez, 41456, 41554, 41655
du Pont, John, 41438, 41486
Dube, Jefta, 41479
Dubinin, Sergei, 41752, 41921
Dubovik, Lew, 41458
Duceppe, Gilles, 41532, 41678
Dudayev, Dzhokhar, 41458
Dugoin, Xavier, 41743
Duhaime, Yves, 41532
Duhalde, Eduardo, 41584, 41767, 41857
Duhalde, Hilda, 41857
Dumont, Ivy L., 41536
Dunbar, Jenkins, 41760
Duncan, Grace, 41732
Dunn, Jennifer, 41726
Dunne, Ben, 41600, 41745, 41783, 41827
Duong Khem, 41684
Duong Van Khanh, 41823
Dupuch, Pierre V., 41536
Duque, Manuel Diamantino Borges, 41575
Duque-Estrada, Estebán, 41442
Duráni, Juan Carlos, 41680
Durdynets, Vasyl, 41611, 41709, 41751, 41752
Dusaidi, Claude, 41761
Dusava, Gabriel, 41779, 41871
Dustboboyev, Firdavs, 41588
Dutko, Tamara, 41458
Dutroux, Marc, 41335, 41466, 41601, 41696, 41885
Dyachenko, Tatyana, 41708
Dyuseynov, Dyusembay, 41693
Dzhafarov, Mirgasan, 41612
Dzharimov, Aslan, 41457
Dzhelepova, Lena, 41506
Dzhurabekov, Ismail, 41818
Dzon, Mathias, 41896
Dzurinda, Mikulas, 41750
Dzyamchuk, Mikalay, 41458

E

Eappen, Matthew, 41854
Earl Spencer, Charles, 41780
Earl, Robert, 41925
East, Paul, 41967
Eastman, T. Ernest, 41724
Ebome, Pierre Claver Zeng, 41480
Eboua, Samuel, 41849
Ebtekar, Ma'sumeh, 41793
Ecclestone, Bernie, 41925
Ecevit, Bulent, 41604, 41702
Echeverri, Gilberto, 41533, 41583
Eckhard, Fred, 41474
Edlinger, Rudolf, 41465
Eduardo, José, 41576
Edzoa, Titus, 41576, 41725
Egal, Mohammed Ibrahim, 41483, 41527, 41949
Eggleton, Arthur, 41679, 41728
Egilio, Joseph, 41548
Egilmez, Mahfi, 41973
Eide, Gen. Vigleik, 41933
Einem, Caspar, 41465
Eisele, Manfred, 41474
Eitach, Chaim, 41889
Eitan, Michael, 41755
Eizenstat, Stuart, 41536, 41666
Ekanayake, Nandimitra, 41692
Ekeus, Rolf, 41519, 41661, 41888
Eksteen, Chris, 41670
Elías, Jorge Ramón, 41810
Elarif, Ibrahim Mohamed, 41852
Elchibey, Abulfaz, 41660, 41922
Elias, Cassius, 41634

Eliasson, Jan, 41938
Elizabeth II, Queen of Gt Britain etc, 41646, 41647, 41699, 41780, 41865, 41920
Elizalde, Ramón, 41635
Ellawela, Nalanda, 41500
Ellison, Chris, 41871
Elmahdi, Elias, 41673
Elrington, Hubert, 41585
Emane, Jean François Ntoutoume, 41480
Embel, Philemon, 41548, 41779, 41968
Emeruah, Air Commodre Samson, 41946
Emin, Enver, 41929
Emmanuel, Vittorio, 41598
Emmanuelli, Henri, 41696
Emperador, Rafael Martinez, 41513
Emsis, Indulis, 41510, 41785
Ename, Samson, 41946
Encargado, Santiago Peréz, 41487
Engell, Hans, 41517
English, Bill, 41967
Enhsayhan, Mendsayhany, 41590
Ensour, Abdullah, 41566
Eoloff, Mary, 41890
Eoloff, Nicholas, 41890
Eran, Oden, 41662
Erbakan, Necmettin, 41511, 41558, 41603, 41652, 41702, 41718, 41788, 41930
Erbilen, Mustafa, 41929
Erdemovic, Drazen, 41456, 41654
Erez, Yalim, 41604, 41702
Eriksson, Herman, 41468
Erlaf, Mohammed Ag, 41804
Ershad, Hussain Mohammad, 41449, 41739
Ersheid, Nathir, 41566
Ersumer, Cumhur, 41702
Erundina, Luiza, 41810
Ervine, David, 41970
Escher, Klaus, 41882
Escobar, Javier, 41768
Esoavelomandrosa, Manasse, 41579
Espinosa Martín, Gen. Ramón, 41858
Espinoza Yachachin, Evaristo Floor, 41812
Espinoza, Gen. Marco Tulio, 41729
Espy, Mike, 41764, 41808, 41952
Esquivel, Manuel, 41585, 41814
Essine, Yuri, 41559
Esso, Laurent, 41946
Estrada, Joseph, 41686, 41962
Estrada, Raul, 41984
Etah, Jerome, 41946
Etete, Chief Dan, 41672, 41946
Etkin, Taner, 41972
Etoundi, Charles, 41946
Etxebeste, Eugenio, 41783
Evert, Miltiades, 41559
Evstafyev, Arkady, 41609, 41920
Eyadema, Gen. Gnassingbe, 41621
Ezra, Gideon, 41517

F

Facetti, Carlos, 41488, 41811
Fachi, Peter, 41721
Fadel, Ali Mahamat Zene Ali, 41626, 41900
Fahd ibn Abdul Aziz, King, 41472, 41603, 41755, 41756, 41983
Faisal, Toujan, 41936
Falcone, Giovanni, 41828
Falconer, Alec, 41885
Fall, Sidi Mohamed Ould Mohamed, 41804, 41944
Fallahiyan, Hojatolislam Ali, 41612, 41793
Fan, Rita, 41447
Farah, Ali Abdi, 41950
Farah, Mohammed Dini, 41950
Farhadi, Mohammed, 41792
Farhan, Hamad al-, 41663
Farkhutdinov, Igor, 41457
Farnleitner, Johann, 41465
Farrakhan, Louis, 41435, 41474
Farrand, Robert W., 41555
Faruqi, Mohammad Omar, 41866
Fashenko, Vladimir, 41785
Fasslabend, Werner, 41465, 41598
Fayed, Dodi, 41780
Fayed, Mohamed al-, 41562, 41744, 41780, 41925
Fedotov, Mikhail, 41507, 41549, 41609
Feingold, Russell, 41854
Feinstein, Diane, 41529
Feissel, Gustave, 41746
Felgate, Walter, 41758
Felipe, Crown Prince, 41742
Ferchiou, Ridha, 41891
Ferguson, Danny, 41854, 41951
Fernández Meijide, Gracela, 41857
Fernández, Atilio R., 41488, 41732
Fernández, Florentino, 41631
Fernández, Roli Rojas, 41488
Fernández, Roque, 41439
Fernández, Salvador, 41585
Fernandes, Carlos Antonio, 41575
Fernandopulle, Jeyaraj, 41692
Ferreira, Daniel, 41673
Ferrero Costa, Eduardo, 41730
Ferrero-Waldner, Benita, 41465
Ferrieux-Patterson, Marie-Noëlle, 41645
Ferro Rodrigues, Eduardo, 41926
Fidel, Don see Velásquez Sánchez, Fidel
Figueres, Jose María, 41814
Figueroa, Armando Caro, 41955
Figueroa, Salvador, 41769
Fihri, Taieb el Fassi, 41797
Filali, Abdellatif, 41713, 41796
Filipov, Ivan, 41506
Filipov, Lyubomir, 41703
Filippenko, Aleksandr, 41457
Filizzola, Carlos, 41811
Fin, Qassem Abu, 41566
Fini, Gianfranco, 41465
Fino, Bashkim, 41557, 41596, 41653, 41747
Fischler, Franz, 41517, 41746
Fiti, Taki, 41605, 41654
Fivaz, George, 41575
Fjaervoll, Dag Jostein, 41881
Fjellanger, Guro, 41881
Flanagan, Ronnie, 41745
Flinn, Kelly, 41629, 41676
Flood, Sarah, 41634
Flores Facussé, Carlos Roberto, 41904
Flores, Carlos Amat, 41585
Flores, Carlos Roberto, 41953
Flores, Marco, 41766
Flowers, Gennifer, 41854, 41902
Fo, Dario, 41893
Foale, Michael, 41666, 41797, 41845
Foccart, Jacques, 41561
Fofana, Bankale, 41760
Fofana, Ibrahima Kassory, 41481, 41899
Foley, James, 41842
Fonaryeva, Natalya, 41786
Fong, Nellie, 41733
Fono, Fred, 41779
Forbes, Martin, 41437
Ford, Wendell, 41437
Foresti, Paolo, 41557
Forlani, Luciano, 41597
Forne, Marc, 41513
Forsido, Tekedel, 41482
Forsyth, Elizabeth, 41467
Forsyth, Michael, 41646
Fortov, Vladimir, 41549
Foster, Vincent, 41675, 41726
Fouda, Magdaleine, 41946
Foulkes, George, 41769, 41812
Fowler, Robert, 41728
Fowzie, A.H.M., 41692
Fox, Liam, 41588
Fox, Marcus, 41646
Fradkov, Michail, 41549, 41609
Fraga Iribarne, Manuel, 41884
François, Walter, 41634
Franchuk, Anatoly, 41508, 41611, 41710
Francisco, Chief Inspector Rene, 41919
Franco, Cayo, 41732
Franco, Gustavo, 41767
Franco, Itamar, 41810
Fraser, Malcolm, 41498
Frechette, Myles, 41441, 41533
Freeh, Louis, 41436, 41472, 41951
Freeman, Roger, 41646
Frenkel, Jacob, 41714
Frey, Claude, 41923
Frey, Roger, 41828
Fria, Ahmed, 41473
Frias, Edith, 41907
Frick, Mario, 41512, 41603
Friedman, Noam, 41470
Friedman, Rodolfo, 41767
Friedrich, Ingo, 41782
Frlec, Boris, 41834
Frommelt, Heinz, 41603
Frowick, Robert, 41833, 41874
Frunzaverde, Sorin, 41977
Fu Quanyou, Gen., 41771, 41813
Fuchs, Franz, 41882
Fuchs, Michael, 41829
Fuentes, Amado Carrillo, 41489
Fujii, Takao, 41815
Fujikura, Nobutaka, 41640
Fujimori, Alberto Keinya, 41438, 41488, 41533, 41582, 41632, 41680, 41811, 41956
Fujimori, Pedro, 41404, 41438, 41488
Fujinami, Takao, 41539
Fujita, Osamu, 41640
Funar, Gheorghe, 41832
Funes, Matías, 41904, 41953
Furayj, Ilyas, 41662
Furundzija, Anto, 41979
Fyodaraw, Rygor, 41458
Fyodorov, Nikolai, 41975

G

Gárcia Márquez, Gabriel, 41857
Gómez Mendez, Alfonso, 41631
Gómez, Milton, 41956
Gaber, Slavko, 41554
Gabriyelyan, Elma, 41835
Gacanovic, Rasim, 41875
Gachhadar, Buay Kumar, 41964
Gadgil, Vithal, 41448
Gado, Seïni Ali, 41673
Gafurov, Saidamin, 41500
Gagliano, Alfonso, 41679
Gagulia, Gennadiy, 41611
Gaiger, Julio, 41730
Gailani, Pir Sayed Ahmed, 41693
Gairy, Sir Eric, 41769
Gaitan, Carlos Julio, 41767
Gakhokidze, Maj.-Gen. Guram, 41754
Galaverna, Juan Carlos, 41767
Galibali, Lambert, 41801
Galtieri, Gen. Leopoldo, 41532
Gama, Jaime, 41926
Gamasakhurdia, Zviad, 41551
Gamatie, Bayard Mariama, 41673
Gambar, Isa, 41973
Gambarov, Miri, 41711
Ganao, Charles David, 41435, 41671, 41723, 41800
Gancharenka, Uladzimir, 41458
Ganchev, Georgi, 41832
Gandhi, Rajiv, 41774, 41914
Gandhi, Sonia, 41636, 41774
Gandois, Jean, 41884, 41971
Gangotena, Arturo, 41487, 41907
Gani, Shkelqim, 41876
Ganic, Ejup, 41555
Gankou, Jean Marie, 41946
Gantar, Payle, 41554
Ganzouri, Kamal Ahmed, 41520, 41755
Garín, Gen. Guillermo, 41906
Garang, John, 41433, 41482, 41526, 41578, 41627, 41720, 41761, 41804, 41852, 41900, 41949
Garba, Salibou, 41626

García Abrego, Juan, 41582
García Castellon, Manuel, 41858
García Damborenea, Ricardo, 41883
García Pica, Marcial, 41730
García Vera, Yadira, 41858
García, Carlos, 41442
Garces, Joan, 41858
Gargoum, Adoum, 41946
Garin, Gen. Guillermo, 41858
Garkun, Uladzimir, 41458
Garoeb, Moses, 41805
Garreton, Roberto, 41723, 41759
Garzón, Baltazar, 41532
Gasimi, Shapur, 41922
Gaspari, Mitja, 41554
Gassay, Pierre, 41896
Gatanazi, Egide, 41431
Gates, Bill, 41845
Gaulieder, Frantisek, 41873
Gautam, Bam Dev, 41544
Gauthier, Michel, 41532
Gavriyski, Svetoslav, 41506, 41703
Gayssot, Jean-Claude, 41695
Gaysyonak, Viktar, 41458
Gazizulin, Farid, 41921, 41974
Gaztulemendi Gil, Salvador, 41828
Gbeho, Victor, 41901
Gbezera-Bria, Michel, 41481, 41624, 41760, 41801
Geagea, Samir, 41663, 41982
Gehrer, Elisabeth, 41465
Gelbard, Robert, 41533, 41790, 41875
Gemici, Hasan, 41703
Genia, Kilroy, 41548, 41741, 41779, 41968
Genyatulin, Ravil, 41457
George, Calixte, 41634
Georgijevski, Ljupco, 41654
Gephardt, Richard, 41436, 41437, 41529, 41628, 41726, 41901
Gerasimaw, Valyantsin, 41458
Geremek, Bronislaw, 41872
Geressy, Patricia, 41629
Gerxhalliu, Fitim, 41505
Getawangan, Vassal, 41502
Ghafur Yunis, Zuhayr Abd al-, 41715
Ghafur, Humam Abd al-Khaliq Abd al-, 41793
Ghafurzai, Abdorrahim, 41774
Ghaith, Saeed Khalfan al-, 41569
Ghanem, Farag Said Ben, 41663
Ghang Wun Tae, 41537
Ghanim, Abdullah Ahmad, 41663
Ghaus, Mullah Mohammed, 41635
Ghawsha, Ibrahim, 41841
Ghazali, Salim bin Abdullah al-, 41981
Ghenda, Raphael, 41622, 41723
Ghlamallah, Boudellah, 41712
Ghomari, Soliman Mohammed al-, 41568
Gigante, Vincent "the Chin", 41727, 41952
Giheno, John, 41548, 41686
Gil Robles, José Maris, 41514, 41469, 41866
Gilford, Frank, 41841, 41889, 41936
Gilford, Yvonne, 41841, 41889, 41936
Gillani, Syed Yousaf Raza, 41447
Gilman, Benjamin A., 41437
Gilmore, James, 41902
Gimzauskas, Kazys, 41941
Ginandjar, Air Vice-Marshal, 41778
Gingrich, Newt, 41436, 41437, 41484, 41580, 41726, 41763, 41807, 41902
Giora, Derek, 41502
Giorgadze, Igor, 41509
Giraud, André, 41743
Giscard d'Estaing, Valéry, 41893
Giuliani, Rudolph, 41765, 41808, 41902
Giusti, Carlos, 41582
Gjata, Rustem, 41979
Gjinushi, Skender, 41979
Gjonnes, Kare, 41881
Glazey, Sergei, 41550
Glenn, John, 41725
Gligorov, Kiro, 41704, 41747, 41934
Goddard, Ian, 41903
Godo, Sabri, 41934
Godoy, Roberto Moreno, 41442
Goh Chok Tong, 41776, 41777, 41823, 41911, 41918, 41449, 41450, 41546, 41685, 41686
Golding, Bruce, 41956
Goldman, Ronald L., 40765, 41485
Gombojav, Jambyn, 41638
Gomes, Ciro, 41810
Gomez, José Francisco, 41586
Goncz, Arpad, 41655, 41932
Gongara, Nkoua Celestin, 41896
Gonul, Ali Riza, 41652
González Insfran, Sebastián, 41906
González Márquez, Felipe, 40747, 40917, 41387, 41415, 41455, 41561, 41698, 41884
González Maldonado, Gen. Juan Evaristo, 41906
González, Antonio Ermán, 41955
González, Carlos, 41681
González, Roberto Robaina, 41536
Gonzales, Martial, 41576
Goodale, Ralph, 41679
Goodhart, Charles, 41699
Goodrich, Reginald, 41724
Gorbenko, Leonid, 41457, 41785
Gorbunovs, Anatolijs, 41510, 41785
Gordon, Pamela, 41537
Gore, Al, 41435, 41437, 41530, 41541, 41568, 41589, 41608, 41738, 41806, 41842, 41853, 41901, 41912, 41923, 41951
Gorelik, Oleg, 41817
Gorriarán Merlo, Enrique, 41730
Goryachev, Yury, 41457
Gotovac, Vlado, 41705, 41979
Gotsev, Vasil, 41653
Gotti, John, 41727
Gottor, Maj. S. S., 41944
Goudja, Adoum, 41626
Gouled, Hassan Aptidon, 41950
Goungouga, Cyril, 41672
Govorin, Boris, 41753
Gowda, H. D. Deve, 41774
Grafenauer, Bozo, 41554
Graham, Al, 41679
Graham, Doug, 41967
Graham, Tommy, 41781
Granic, Mate, 41791, 41834
Grant, Bernie, 41769
Grasser, Karl-Heinz, 41512
Gray, Herb, 41679
Greaves, Damian, 41634
Greer, Ian, 41562
Gregori, José, 41584
Gromov, Adml. Feliks, 41753, 41922
Guale, Alfredo Saltos, 41486
Guan Jinsheng, 41493
Gubbay, Anthony, 41478
Gueladio, Kamara Aly, 41944
Guerra, Alfonso, 41698
Guerraoui, Abdellatif, 41796
Guerrero Mora, Lorenzo, 41442, 41856
Guevara, Ernesto Che, 41633, 41731, 41859
Guig, Mohamed Lemine Ould, 41944
Guigoui, Elisabeth, 41695
Guillermo, Camarada, 41812
Gujral, I. K., 41543, 41586, 41636, 41691, 41692, 41740, 41774, 41819, 41864, 41865, 41914, 41964
Gukasyan, Arkadiy, 41835
Guldiman, Tim, 41458
Guliyev, Gudred Ramazan, 41711
Guluzade, Vafa, 41710
Gumel, Maj.-Gen. Ibrahim, 41946
Gunawardena, Indika, 41692
Gunera de Melgar, Alba Nora, 41904
Guo Baosheng, 41690
Gupta, Indrajit, 41587, 41775, 41914
Gurdal, Ibrahim, 41702
Gurdere, Metin, 41703
Gurel, Sukru Sina, 41703
Gures, Dogan, 41746
Gurung, Tul Bahadur, 41544
Gurung, Krishna Bahadur, 41964
Gurung, Palten, 41449, 41820, 41864, 41964
Guseinov, Surat, 41460, 41973
Gusinsky, Vladimir, 41836
Gusmao, Jose "Xanana", 41778
Gustov, Vadim, 41457
Gut, Rainer, 41461
Gutiérrez Rebollo, Jesús, 41489, 41534
Gutteres, Antonio, 41926
Guzhvin, Anatoly, 41457
Gwanmesia, Lucy, 41946
Gyatso, His Holiness Tenzin, Dalai Lama, 41541, 41638, 41961

H

Hänsch, Klaus, 40119, 41469
Ha Quang Du, 41822
Haarstad, Ragnhild Queseth, 41881
Habibi, Hassan Ebrahim, 41792
Habibie, B. J., 41778
Habyarimana, Juvénal, 41574, 41897
Hachani, Abdelkader, 41756
Hafi, Abdelsadim al-, 41797
Hafiz, Suleiman, 41566
Hague, William, 41648, 41700, 41827, 41885, 41969
Haidar, Salman, 41691
Haidara, Fatou, 41804
Haiveta, Chris, 41548, 41686, 41778, 41920, 41967
Hajdari, Azem, 41834
Hajdari, Dzemail, 41654
Hajdenberg, Henri, 41828
Haji, Morteza, 41792
Halbwachs, Jean-Pierre, 41474
Haley, Maria, 41436
Haliday, Denis, 41474
Hall, Aleksander, 41460
Hallier, Jean-Edern, 41601
Hamad, Nouri, 41568
Hamad, Shaikh, 41716
Hamadou, Barkat Gourad, 41950
Hamanaka, Yasuo, 41148, 41371, 41445, 41497
Hamatta, Mahamat Nimir, 41626
Hambayi, Alfeyo, 41801, 41948
Hamdoon, Nizar, 41938
Hamid, Ayyoub, 41795
Hamilton, Neil, 41562, 41646, 41744, 41925
Hamit, Abdelrahim Breme, 41626
Hamit, Kedellah Younous, 41626
Hamitou, Abdelkader, 41712
Hammadi, Fouad, 41797
Hammadi, Hamid Yusuf, 41793
Hammer, Zevulun, 41940
Hamraoui, Habib Chawki, 41712
Hamzik, Pavol, 41656, 41706
Han Fengying, 41738
Han Seung Soo, 41537
Handal, Jorge Shafik, 41535
Handke, Miroslaw, 41872
Handziski, Blagoj, 41654
Hanegbi, Tzahi, 41471, 41518, 41614, 41662
Hanekom, Gert, 41947
Hani, Chris, 41758
Hanley, Jeremy, 41447
Hanson, Pauline, 41548, 41644, 41967
Haomae, William, 41502
Haq, Mansurul, 41587, 41636
Haqqani, Ershad Ahmed, 41448
Haralambous, Efstratios, 41973
Harald V, King, 41881
Harchaoui, Abdelkarim, 41712
Hariri, Rafiq al-, 41567, 41754, 41888, 41937
Harman, Harriet, 41647, 41969
Harmoko, 41644, 41685
Harney, Mary, 41649, 41699
Haroutunian, Khosrov, 39332, 41469
Harriman, Averell, 41486
Harriman, Pamela, 41486
Harrington, William, 41948
Harris, Eoghan, 41886
Harris, Mike, 41856

Harry, Prince, see Henry, Prince
Hartono, Raden, 41685
Hasan, Gen. Ibrahim Sulayman, 41852
Hashemi-Taba, Seyyed Mostafa, 41793
Hashimoto, Ryutaro, 41051, 41438, 41444, 41582, 41591, 41632, 41640, 41687, 41734, 41771, 41815, 41908, 41930, 41937, 41959, 41963
Hashmi, Javed, 41740
Hasina Wajed, Shaikh, 41448, 41449, 41500, 41964
Hass, Karl, 41522, 41757
Hassan II, King, 41477, 41796, 41800, 41935
Hassan Omar, Abu, 41643
Hassan, Crown Prince, 41662, 41794, 41890
Hassanali, Noor, 41490
Hasymov, Vagif, 41612
Hatch, Orrin G., 41437
Hatoyama, Yukio, 41815
Haughey, Charles, 41600, 41745, 41783, 41827
Haugland, Valgerd Svarstad, 41881
Hauri, Kurt, 41757
Havel, Vaclav, 41417, 41461, 41553, 41606, 41750, 41831, 41872, 41931, 41977
Hayashi, Sadayuki, 41497
Hayashi, Yoshiro, 41815
Hayat, Qari Mohammad Umar, 41740
Hayes, Rita, 41493
Hays, Henry Francis, 41677
Hazaa, Omar al-, 41472
Hazaa, Ra'ad al-, 41472
Heath, Sir Edward, 41780
Heffernan, Margaret, 41600
Hefny, Mostafa, 41677
Hekmatyar, Gulbuddin, 41693
Hellawell, Keith, 41886
Helms, Jesse, 41437, 41717, 41807
Henríquez, Sergio, 41730
Henry, Prince, 41780
Herman, Alexis, 41436, 41531, 41580
Hermanus, Merry, 41466, 41560
Hermosín, Carmen, 41698
Hermosilla, Edmundo, 41730
Hermoza Moya, Carlos, 41731
Hermoza Ríos, Nicolás, 41956
Hernando, Jesus Martin, 41828
Herron, John, 41966
Herzog, Chaim, 41614
Herzog, Roman, 41599, 41608
Heseltine, Michael, 41562, 41646, 41648, 41885
Hess, Rudolf, 41782
Heyliger, Hugh, 41957
Hickey, Michael, 41515
Hickey, Vincent, 41515
Hidalgo, Estuardo, 41681
Hidoussi, Aissa, 41891
Hiebert, Murray, 41823
Higa, Tetsuya, 41959
Hijazi, Mohammed Mahmud al-, 41568
Hinai, Mohammad bin Abdukkah bin Zahir al-, 41981
Hindi, Amin Al-, 41714
Hindley, Michael, 41885
Hinds, Samuel, 41534, 41954
Hintze, Peter, 41599
Hirabayashi, Hiroshi, 41567
Hirst, Michael, 41562
Hishoono, Kanana, 41947
Hla Myint Swe, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Ho Sok, 41733
Hoang Duc Nghi, 41822
Hodak, Bebojsa, 41834
Hoffa, James Jr, 41766
Hoffa, James, 41766
Hoffman, Dustin, 41464
Hogg, Douglas, 41516
Hojjati, Mahmud, 41792
Hokama Tokashiki, Daniel, 41956
Holbrooke, Richard, 41569, 41701, 41746, 41790, 41877, 41929
Holdych, Dmytro, 41838
Holl, Norbert, 41366, 41451
Hollande, François, 41695
Holmes Trujillo, Carlos, 41631
Holomisa, Bantu, 41722, 41802
Holovaty, Serhy, 41508
Holt, Anne, 41515
Holubchenko, Anatoly, 41752
Hong In Kil, 41496, 41688
Hong Sa Tok, 41773
Hong Song Nam, 41495
Hong, Seruwaia, 41779
Hoover, J. Edgar, 41727
Horchani, Ameur, 41891
Horiuchi, Mitsuo, 41815
Horn, Gyula, 41558, 41655, 41791, 41831, 41873, 41874, 41932
Hosni, Shaikh Amer bin Shwain al-, 41981
Hosokawa, Morihiro, 41687, 41736
Hossain, Shah Moazzem, 41739
Hossi, Victorino Domingos, 41576
Hostasch, Lore, 41435
Houmeid, Beijel Ould, 41482
Hourani, Muhammed Saleh, 41566
Howard, John, 41501, 41502, 41596, 41644, 41824, 41870, 41966
Howard, Michael, 41494, 41648, 41700
Howard, Sandra, 41760
Howe, Carol, 41581, 41727
Hoybraten, Dagfinn, 41881
Hoyte, Desmond, 41954
Hoz de Vila, Tito, 41768
Hrawi, Elias, 41982
Hristev, Florin, 41710
Hryc, Andrej, 41873
Hrytsenko, Anatoly, 41508, 41611
Hsieh Shen-san, 41639
Hsu Chieh-kwei, 41639, 41770
Hsu Hsin-liang, 41541
Hu Chin-piao, 41770
Hu Jintao, 41813, 41492
Hu Tsu Tau, Richard, 41735, 41968
Hu Yaobang, 41491
Hu, Jason, 41770
Hua Chia-chih, 41770
Huaman, Demetrio Marcelo, 41768
Huang Ju, 41813
Huang Shugang, 41738
Huang Ta-chou, 41770
Huang Te-fu, 41770
Huang, John, 41436, 41485, 41725, 41853
Hubbell, Webster, 41485, 41530, 41579
Hudoly, Dmytro, 41752
Hue, Robert, 41927
Hughes, Hubert, 41443
Hujaylan, Jamil al-, 41569
Hume, John, 41516
Hun Sen, 41733, 41776, 41821, 41870, 41917, 41961, 41500, 41545, 41594, 41642, 41683
Hunuehu, Edward, 41645
Hureyev, Vasyl, 41508, 41752
Hurtado, Osvaldo, 41956
Husakov, Volodymyr, 41752
Husayn, Ahmad Musa'id, 41663
Hussain, Chaudry Shujaat, 41499
Hussain, Syeda Abida, 41499
Hussein ibn Talal, King, 41469, 41517, 41518, 41564, 41566, 41614, 41662, 41794, 41796, 41840, 41841, 41890, 41936
Hussein, Qusai, 41567, 41793
Hussein, Raghad, 41472
Hussein, Rana, 41472
Hussein, Saddam, 41425, 41472, 41520, 41567, 41715, 41793, 41888, 41938
Hussein, Sajida, 41472
Hussein, Udai, 41425, 41472, 41567, 41715, 41793
Huwaish, Abdel-Tawab Abdullah Mullah, 41716
Hwang Byong Tae, 41496, 41688
Hwang Chang Pyung, 41537
Hwang Jang Yop, 41772, 41494, 41495, 41538, 41539, 41593, 41642
Hyde, Henry J., 41437

I

Iakobidze, David, 40611, 41660
Iangalio, Masket, 41968
Ibadov, Mubariz, 41922
Ibovi, François, 41896
Ibrahim, Abdallah, 41725, 41762, 41805, 41852
Ibrahim, Abdullahi, 41946
Ibrahim, C.M., 41587
Ibrahim, Izzat, 41793
Ibrahim, Najih, 41755
Ibuki, Bunmei, 41815
Ickes, Harold M., 41485, 41580, 41806,
Idris, Gen. Muhammad Abd al-Qadir, 41852
Ienaga, Saburo, 41771
Ieng Sary, 41917
Ieng Vut, 41917
Ierodhiakonou, Leondios, 41603
Igiebor, Noso, 41849
Ignatenko, Vitaly, 41549
Ignatenko, Vladimir, 41658
Ignatyev, Sergei, 41609
Igumnov, Gennady, 41457
Ijape, Mathias, 41548, 41686
Ikeda, Yukihiko, 41498, 41640, 41815
Ikimi, Chief Tom, 41434, 41481, 41625, 41849, 41946
Iliadhis, Constantine, 41929
Iliescu, Ion, 41376, 41461, 41832
Ilijevski, Petar, 41654
Ilina, Gen. Decebal, 41791
Ilom, Gaspar see Asturias, Rodrigo
Ilves, Toomas Hendrik, 41552
Ilyukhin, Viktor, 41456, 41507, 41549, 41658
Im Nguon, 41776
Imami, Arben, 41748
Imanaliyev, Muratbek, 41738
Imbiky, Anaclet, 41579
Imranullah Khan, 41588
Inderfurth, Karl, 41966
Indyk, Martin, 41794
Indzhova, Renata, 41703
Ing Huot, 41734, 41776, 41821
Ingraham, Hubert A., 41490, 41535
Ingraham, Theresa Moxey, 41536
Insulza, Miguel, 41858
Ionescu, Valentin, 41977
Iribarren, Jaime, 41463
Irvine of Lairg, Lord, 41646
Iryani, Abdul Ali al-Karim al-, 41663, 41936, 41981
Isai, Hekuran, 41876
Ishaq, Malik, 41819
Ishayev, Viktor, 41457
Islami, Kastriot, 41747
Ismai'l, Mustafa Uthman, 41673
Ismail, Razali, 41717, 41845
Ismailov, Madel, 41818
Ismoil, Eyad, 41765, 41903
Issing, Otmar, 41650
Issoufou, Mahamadou, 41433, 41899
Iturralde, Carlos, 41768
Ivanov, Khristo, 41832
Ivcher, Baruch, 41730, 41812
Ivri, David, 41517
Izetbegovic, Alija, 41504, 41655, 41790, 41833, 41978
Izui, Junichi, 41445, 41815, 41960
Izurieta, Maj.-Gen. Ricardo, 41858

J

Jaafar, Ghadzali, 41451
Jabali, Ahmed Salem al-, 41664
Jabali, Ghazi, 41794, 41940
Jackson, Rev. Jesse, 41764
Jackson, Thomas Penfield, 41580, 41952
Jacquit, Simon, 41579
Jagan, Cheddi, 41534, 41586, 41954
Jagan, Janet, 41534, 41954
Jagielinski, Roman, 41553
Jagland, Thorbjorn, 41784, 41829, 41881

Jagmetti, Carlo, 41461
Jahangiri, Eshaq, 41792
Jain, Justice Milap Chand, 41914
Jaksons, Viktors, 41785
Jalan, Bimal, 41914
Jalappa, R.L., 41587
Jalichandra, Kirkkiat, 41545
Jallah, Peter Bona, 41724
Jalloh, Capt. (retd) Tom, 41724
Jamali, Mohammed Fadhil Abbas al-, 41662
James, Winford, 41634
Jammal, Abd al-Qadir Abd al-Rahman Ba, 41663
Jammeh, Yahya, 41434, 41529, 41579
Jamur, Mahmud Ali, 41714
Jang Sung Gil, 41772
Jang Sung Ho, 41772
Janier-Dubry, Franck, 41966
Janiszewsk, Janek, 41460, 41872
Jankovic, Dragoljub, 41455
Janzurii, Kamal Ahmed al-, 41935
Jaramillo, Mario, 41486
Jassán, Elías, 41680
Jatta, Famara, 41529
Jawarish, Ali, 41940
Jayaratna, D.M., 41692
Jegham, Mohammed, 41473
Jeknic, Janko, 41455
Jelavic, Ante, 41704
Jena, Srikant Kumar, 41587
Jenkins, Ffion, 41969
Jensen, Erik, 41568
Jeong Shi Chae, 41537
Jereb, Marjan, 41554
Jeri, Mohammed, 41473
Jettou, Driss, 41796
Jeyaretnam, J. B., 41777, 41823, 41918
Jeydid, Moulay el Hassan Ould, 41944
Jia Qinglin, 41813
Jiang Chunyun, 41813
Jiang Enzhu, 41960
Jiang Qing, 41491
Jiang Zemin, 41732, 41734, 41770, 41813, 41816, 41860, 41909, 41911, 41933, 41960, 41963, 41445, 41491, 41541, 41589, 41637, 41704
Jianxin, Ren, 41540
Jiddou, Khattri Ould, 41944
Jimi, Shozaburo, 41815
Jimmy, Willie, 41645, 41825
Jiyane, Ziba, 41430, 41722
Job, Morgan, 41634
Johansen, Lars Emil, 41830
John Paul II, His Holiness Pope (Karol Wojtyla), 41606, 41663, 41707, 41709, 41742, 41769, 41783, 41957
John, Velon, 41634
Johnson, Gen. Roosevelt, 41528, 41625
Johnson, Hilde Frafjord, 41881
Johnson, Italia, 41586
Johnson-Sirleaf, Ellen, 41625, 41724
Johnston, Donald, 41444
Jokanovic, Vukasin, 41555
Jolicoeur, J. Bénoit, 41721
Jones, Linda, 41952
Jones, Paula Corbin, 41436, 41629, 41675, 41725, 41764, 41806, 41853, 41902, 41951
Jones, Stephen, 41727
Jongic, Nikola, 41834
Jongjian, Jin, 41474
Jordán Morales, Alfredo, 41858
Jordán, Servando, 41730
Joseph, Molwyn, 41957
Joshi, Bhoj Raj, 41544
Jospin, Lionel, 41649, 41695, 41742, 41782, 41784, 41884, 41971
Joulwan, Gen. George, 41569, 41655, 41749
Jow, Satang, 41529
Jowell, Tessa, 41925, 41968
Juan Carlos, King, 41742, 41883
Julius, DeAnne, 41699
Jull, David, 41824
Jum'a, Sa'ed Eddin, 41566
Jumanbekov, Janisbeck, 41636
Jumaniyozov, Marks, 41866
Junaid, Mohammed Ahmad al-, 41663
Juncker, Jean-Claude, 41838, 41928, 41968
Jundzis, Talavs, 41707, 41785
Junjuvili, Horacio, 41803
Juppé, Alain, 41463, 41514, 41561, 41601, 41649, 41694, 41743
Jurin, Laksanawisit, 41916
Jurkans, Ernests, 41881

K

Kaba, Maxwell, 41760
Kaba, Ousmane, 41481
Kabariti, Abdul-Karim, 41936
Kabbah, Ahmad Tejan, 41529, 41625, 41672, 41724, 41763, 41803, 41849, 41945
Kabbaj, Mohamed, 41664
Kabbaj, Omar, 41628
Kaberuka, Donat, 41851
Kabila, Laurent, 41431, 41477, 41525, 41573, 41621, 41669, 41674, 41717, 41723, 41759, 41800, 41848, 41896, 41941, 41946
Kabiligi, Col. Gratien, 41525, 41721
Kabir, Mawlawi Abdol, 41866
Kabore, Emile, 41672
Kabore, Joseph, 41672
Kabua, Anata, 41413, 41452
Kabua, Imata, 41413, 41452
Kadaga, Rebecca, 41527
Kadayat, Bhim Bahadur, 41544
Kader, Obaidul, 41449
Kadhafi, Col. Moamer al, 41474, 41664, 41891, 41928
Kadmira, Cecilia, 41897
Kado, Pascal, 41481
Kagame, Maj.-Gen. Paul, 41431, 41761, 41897
Kahalani, Avigdor, 41517, 41840, 41840
Kahikara, Kamara wa, 41622
Kahn, Gohar Ayub, 41693
Kaibanja, J. K., 41944
Kaidoum, Yahia, 41712
Kajiyama, Seiroku, 41498, 41640, 41771, 41816
Kaksitis, Juris, 41510, 41707, 41785
Kalam, A. P. J. Abdul, 41820
Kalantari, Isa, 41792
Kalchenko, Valery, 41752
Kalenja, Astrit, 41557
Kalinowski, Jaroslaw, 41608, 41872
Kallas, Siim, 41459, 41510
Kallel, Abdallah, 41473
Kallon, Morris, 41577
Kalman, Jozef, 41932
Kalmurzayev, Sarybai, 41542
Kaltakhchyan, Pavel, 41922
Kalvoda, Jan, 41417, 41553
Kamak, Ali Abu, 41486
Kamali, Hossein, 41792
Kamara, Col. K. I. S., 41724, 41944
Kamara, Maj. A. S., 41944
Kamata, Michisada, 41539
Kambale, Matukulo, 41622
Kambanda, Jean, 41720
Kamei, Hisaoki, 41815
Kamil, Hussein, 41472
Kamil, Saddam, 41472
Kaminska, Teresa, 41872
Kan, Naoto, 41815
Kanafani, Marwan, 41662
Kanchanalak, Pauline, 41485
Kandakai, Evelyne, 41760
Kang Bong Kyun, 41773, 41537
Kang In Sop, 41537
Kang Kyung Shik, 41773, 41863, 41909, 41537
Kang Sae Jam, 41773
Kang Sam Jae, 41863
Kang Song San, 41495
Kang Yun Jung, 41911
Kangai, Kumbirai, 41722
Kanju, Mohammed Siddique, 41965
Kanka, Megan, 41764
Kanneh, Vamba, 41528
Kant, Krishan, 41775
Kanza, Thomas, 41669
Kao Kung-lian, 41770
Kapanga, André, 41759
Kapera, Kazimierz, 41872
Kapita, Paul-Gabriel, 41759
Kapussuz, Salih, 41604
Kara, Burhan, 41703
Karadayi, Gen. Ismail Hakki, 41877
Karadimov, Nikola, 41506
Karadzic, Radovan, 41654, 41748, 41790, 41833, 41874, 41933, 41979
Karaha, Bisima, 41622, 41669
Karajci, Gustav, 41656, 41706, 41750
Karakuyu, Ismail, 41652
Karamanlis, Constantine, 41559
Karamanlis, Costas, 41559
Karamanukyan, Shagen, 41711
Karambal, Mahamat Ahmat, 41626
Karami, Rachid, 41663, 41982
Karamira, Froduald, 41477
Karani, Mathias, 41968
Karashkow, Valery, 41458
Karasyk, Yury, 41752
Karbaschi, Hossain, 41716
Kari, Hilda, 41779
Karie, Robert, 41645
Karim, Younes, 41712
Karimov, Islam, 41741, 41818, 41866
Karkini, Arben, 41789
Karmi, 2nd Lt. Jaanus, 41839
Karpenka, Genadz, 41459
Karpov, Anatoly, 41507
Kartman, Charles, 41538, 41910
Kasavubu, Joseph, 41800
Kasavubu, Justine Mpoyo, 41622, 41759
Kasi, Mir Aimal, 41903, 41914
Kasich, John, 41437
Kasoulides, Ioanins, 41603, 41702, 41835
Kastrati, Ekrem, 41557
Kasyanenko, Anatoly, 41752
Kasymov, Col. Sukhrob, 41773
Kategaya, Eriya, 41527
Kaukimoce, Jonetani, 41779
Kaumi, Simon, 41779, 41825, 41968
Kaunda, Kenneth, 41758, 41802, 41851, 41948
Kavak, Cavit, 41703
Kavaldzhiev, Todor, 41876
Kavindele, Enock, 41801, 41948
Kawano, Takehiko, 41539
Kawara, Tsutomu, 41815
Kaya, Paul, 41896
Kayuma, Maj.-Gen. Charles, 41948
Kazakov, Aleksandr, 41920, 41974
Kazazi, Ali, 41557
Kazhageldin, Akezhan, 41542, 41774, 41867
Kazigiyé, Prime, 41622
Kazlow, Pyotr, 41458
Kebzabo, Saleh, 41626
Kechoud, Mohamed, 41712
Keinya Fujimori, Alberto, 41730, 41768
Keita, Ibrahim Boubacar, 41804
Keleti, Gyorgy, 41511
Kelkal, Khaled, 41927
Kelly, Patrick, 41970
Kemp, David, 41871
Kenani, Nabil, 41980
Kendall, Wilfred, 41452
Kenik, Ivan, 41458
Kennedy, Claudia, 41531
Kennedy, Michael, 41952
Kennedy, Robert, 41952
Kerkabov, Rovshan, 41966
Kernot, Cheryl, 41871
Kerr, Hugh, 41885
Kert, Johannes, 41839
Kert, Maj.- Gen. Johannes, 41881
Kesri, Sitaram, 41448, 41543, 41586, 41636, 41691, 41774, 41914, 41964

Kessler, Denis, 41884
Ket Sein, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Ketema, Seifu, 41482
Kevorkian, Jack, 41903
Khachatryan, Norayar, 41711
Khaddam, Abdel Halim, 41715, 41938
Khadka, Khum Bahadur, 41964
Khair, Tayeb Ibrahim Mohamed, 41527
Khairat, Maj.-Gen. Raouf, 41843
Khalaf, Rima, 41566
Khalafov, Rafig Rasul, 41711
Khalap, Ramakant, 41740
Khaleque, Falukder M.A., 41449
Khalid, Malik Meraj, 41447
Khalifa, Shaikh Isa bin Sulman al-, 41474, 41569, 41940
Khalifa, Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak al-, 41568
Khalil, Driss, 41521, 41796
Khalil, Lafi, 41765
Khalilli, Karim, 41500
Khamenei, Ayatollah Seyed Ali, 41612, 41792, 41939, 41980
Khan, Ali Kuli, 41587
Khan, Ghulam Ishaq, 41498
Khan, Gohar Ayub, 41499, 41587
Khan, Imran, 41047, 41498
Khan, Nisar Ali, 41499
Kharbash, Mohammed Khalfan bin, 41569
Kharlap, Anatol, 41458
Kharrazi, Kamal, 41792, 41866, 41939
Khashaggo, Adnan, 41545
Khasru, Abdul Matin, 41448
Khasu, Khauta, 41950
Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad, 41661, 41716, 41756, 41792, 41793, 41888, 41939, 41966, 41980, 41981,41985
Khattak, Mohammed Abbas, 41587
Khatzinikolaou, Yeoryios, 41603
Khemeri, Ridha, 41797
Kheng Sar, 41961
Khieu, Samphan, 41683
Khin Maung Than, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Khin Maung Thein, U, 41915, 41963
Khin Nyunt, Lt.-Gen., 41594, 41776, 41915
Khliva, Sidi Ould, 41434
Khlystun, Viktor, 41549, 41658
Khmelnov, Igor, 41609, 41708
Khmelnov, Viktor, 41975
Khodyrev, Gennady, 41753
Khomeini, Ayatollah, 41520
Khorishko, Anatoly, 41508, 41610
Khosit Panpiamrat, 41868
Khouna, Cheikh el Avia Ould Mohamed, 41944
Khrapanov, Viktor, 41693
Khreishah, Saleh, 41566
Khristofides, Manolis, 41603
Khristov, Rumen, 41506
Khudoberdiyev, Col. Mahmud, 41738, 41773, 41866, 41964
Khumalo, Zakhele, 41430, 41722
Khunying, Nongyao Chaiseri, 41868
Khuwaiter, Abd al-Aziz bin Abdallah al-, 41756
Kibaki, Mwai, 41949
Kieffer, Fernando, 41768
Kigoda, Abdalla, 41478
Kijac, Dragan, 41790
Kikwete, Jakaya, 41762
Kilac, Dragan, 41705, 41748
Kilman, Sato, 41645
Kim Chong Ku, 41773
Kim Chong U, 41593
Kim Dae Jung, 41443, 41444, 41496, 41688, 41737, 41863, 41910, 41958
Kim Deog Ryong, 41537
Kim Dong Jin, 41537, 41773
Kim Duk Hung, 41494, 41593
Kim Hee Chan, 41592
Kim Hyon Bae, 41538
Kim Hyun Chul, 41496, 41537, 41538, 41592, 41641, 41688, 41863, 41910
Kim Il Sung, 41737, 41816, 41862
Kim In Ho, 41537, 41538, 41909
Kim Jae Dok, 41641
Kim Jong Il, 41494, 41538, 41737, 41816, 41862
Kim Jong Pil, 41443, 41444, 41910
Kim Ki Suk, 41537, 41773
Kim Ki Sup, 41496, 41641, 41688, 41863
Kim Kwang Jin, Vice-Marshall, 41495
Kim Kye Kwan, 41538, 41593, 41910
Kim Mun Song, 41593
Kim Sang Hyun, 41641
Kim Soo Han, 41592
Kim Sun Hong, 41863
Kim Tae Joung, 41863
Kim Woo Suk, 41496, 41537, 41688
Kim Yong Chun, 41593
Kim Yong Nam, 41737
Kim Yong Sun, 41910
Kim Yong Tae, 41537
Kim Young Sam, 41443, 41496, 41537, 41592, 41641, 41688, 41737, 41773, 41817, 41863, 41909, 41911, 41958
Kim Young Suk, 41909
Kim Yun Kuk, 41537
Kimura, Takemune, 41862
Kin-Kiey, Mulumba, 41621
Kinelev, Vladimir, 41549
King, Angela, 41474
King, Maj. Victor, 41724, 41944
King, Martin Luther, 41727
Kingibe, Baba Gana, 41946
Kinkel, Klaus, 41468, 41701, 41791, 41793
Kipalan, Albert, 41548
Kiriyenko, Sergei, 41658, 41787, 41921, 41974
Kirsteins, Aleksandrs, 41510, 41657, 41707
Kishi, Masafumi, 41370, 41444, 41497
Kislitsyn, Vyacheslav, 41457
Kislyuk, Mikhail, 41753
Kissassé, André Ngandu, 41431
Kitanovski, Lazar, 41877
Kitete, Pierre Lokombe, 41669
Kivrikoglu, Gen. Huseyin, 41929
Kjarsgaard, Pia, 41924
Klassen, Mait, 41552
Klaus, Vaclav, 41656, 41706, 41750, 41872, 41931, 41977
Kleiber, Günter, 41782
Klein, Maj.-Gen. Jacques, 41456, 41555, 41606, 41791
Klein, Ralph, 41532
Kleppa, Magnhild Meltveit, 41881
Klickovic, Gojko, 41748
Klima, Viktor, 41465, 41598
Klodimar, Kinza, 41502
Klosi, Fatos, 41653, 41789
Klyuchnikov, Volodymyr, 41551
Knowles, James, 41536, 41677
Kobets, Konstantin, 41658
Kocarnik, Ivan, 41656, 41706
Kocharyan, Robert, 41551, 41711, 41835
Kodi, Ezeikel, 41482
Kodock, Augustin Frederick, 41577
Koech, J.K., 41432
Koga, Makoto, 41498, 41816
Koh Kun, 41773, 41963, 41537
Koh Young Bok, 41911
Kohl, Helmut, 41417, 41418, 41464, 41512, 41553, 41560, 41598, 41610, 41617, 41650, 41696, 41700, 41717, 41743, 41781, 41784, 41829, 41882, 41927, 41972
Koibla, Djimasta, 41626
Koike, Ryuichi, 41640, 41687, 41736, 41816
Koike, Yoshinori, 41640
Koirala, Bipen, 41964
Koirala, Girija Prasad, 41449
Koizumi, Junichiro, 41815
Kok, Wim, 41651
Kokaraw, Valery, 41458
Kokh, Alfred, 41549, 41785, 41836, 41920
Kokoshin, Andrei, 41786
Kokov, Valery, 41457
Kolane, T., 41758, 41803
Kolelas, Bernard, 41671, 41723, 41800, 41896
Kolingba, Gen. Andre, 41481
Kolinowski, Jaroslaw, 41553
Kolisang, Godfrey, 41670
Koller, Arnold, 41554, 41976
Kolodko, Grzegorz, 41510
Kolomeytsev, Nikolai, 41708
Kolpakov, Konstantin, 41867
Komilov, Abdulaziz, 41693
Komolowski, Longin, 41872
Komorowski, Bronislaw, 41460
Komura, Masahiko, 41533
Koné, Adama, 41804
Konare, Alpha Oumar, 41529, 41577, 41626, 41760, 41804, 41944
Kondi, Thimjo, 41748
Kondo, Toshiyuki, 41539, 41592
Kondratenko, Nikolai, 41457
Kondratov, Viktor, 41658, 41708
Kones, Kipkalya, 41432
Kong Muni, 41777
Konga, Nakikus, 41548, 41779
Kongol, Mwenze, 41622
Kongolo, Mwenze, 41723, 41848
Kontic, Radoje, 41554, 41978
Koornhof, Piet, 41623
Koptev, Yuri, 41842
Koptev, Yuriy, 41893
Korbut, Mikalay, 41751
Kordic, Dario, 41875
Kornblum, John, 41455
Koroma, Maj. Johnny Paul, 41625, 41672, 41674, 41724, 41803, 41849, 41944
Korowi, Sir Wiwa, 41920
Korzhakov, Aleksandr, 41507, 41708, 41837
Kos, Rudolph, 41728
Kosiis, Nikolaos, 41603
Kosova, Sheme, 41556
Kosso, Gotlieb Mone, 41946
Kostenko, Yury, 41509, 41611, 41752
Kostov, Ivan, 41453, 41506, 41604, 41653, 41703, 41746, 41934, 41978
Kostov, Kimitar, 41506
Kostsin, Uladzimir, 41785
Kotelkin, Maj.-Gen. Aleksandr, 41786
Kouomegni, Augustin Kontchou, 41946
Koussou, Ibrahim, 41673, 41945
Koutaba, Michel, 41672
Kouyate, Lansana, 41763
Kovac, Bogomir, 41932
Kovac, Michal, 41504, 41607, 41656, 41706, 41750, 41873, 41977
Kovacevic, Milan, 41749
Kovacevic, Vladamir, 41875
Kovalyov, Valentin, 41549, 41708, 41752
Koy, James Ah, 41779
Koyama, Hiroshi, 41539
Kozlik, Sergej, 41977
Kozuma, Masanori, 41445
Kraft, Vahur, 41924
Krajisnik, Momcilo, 41555, 41749, 41790, 41833, 41874, 41978
Kramplova, Zdenka, 41706
Kranich, Heiki, 41510
Krasnov, Mikhail, 41609
Krastins, Andrejs, 41510, 41657, 41657, 41707
Krasts, Guntars, 41510, 41785, 41924
Kraus, Wilhelm, 41506, 41653
Kravchenko, Yury, 41752
Kravchuk, Leonid, 41659
Krechka, Pyotr, 41458
Kreishan, Tawliq, 41566
Kreituse, Ilga, 41552
Kreituss, Aivars Guntis, 41460, 41552
Krenz, Egon, 41782, 41829
Krever, Horace, 41904
Kriel, Hernus, 41623
Kristopans, Vilis, 41510, 41785
Kromah, Alhaji, 41528, 41625, 41945
Kropiwnicki, Jerzy, 41872
Kruhlov, Mykola, 41660

Kryuchkov, Vladimir, 41753
Krzaklewski, Marian, 41553, 41832, 41872, 41931
Kuandykov, Batalbek, 41867
Kubri, Tiit, 41552
Kubuabola, Ratu Inoke, 41779
Kubwalo, Joseph, 41721
Kucan, Milan, 41711, 41874, 41932, 41979
Kuchma, Leonid, 41459, 41508, 41551, 41610, 41611, 41657, 41660, 41706, 41709, 41751, 41787, 41837, 41878, 41922, 41975
Kudashow, Valery, 41458
Kudrin, Aleksei, 41609, 41752
Kuehnl, Karel, 41706
Kuligov, Timur, 41867
Kulikov, Anatoly, 41507, 41549, 41708
Kulikov, Georgy, 41708
Kuljis, Ivo, 41680, 41768
Kulmakhanov, Shalbay, 41693
Kulniyazov, Amangeldi, 41739
Kulyk, Zynovy, 41787
Kumar, M.P. Veerendra, 41587, 41691
Kumaratunga, Chandrika Bandaranaike, 41544, 41588, 41692, 41693, 41775, 41821, 41865
Kume, Kristaq, 41653
Kuncze, Gabor, 41607, 41655
Kuo Wan-jung, Shirley, 41770
Kupreskic, Vlatko, 41979
Kurdi, Ashraf, 41566
Kuroyedov, Adml. Vladimir, 41922
Kurt, Nafiz, 41604
Kusar, Janko, 41554
Kutan, Recai, 41662
Kutlesic, Vladan, 41555
Kuzmuk, Oleksandr, 41752, 41787
Kuznyatsow, Georhiy, 41458
Kvapil, Tomas, 41656
Kvashnin, Anatoly, 41657
Kviraia, Shota, 41754
Kwainirara, Enele, 41779
Kwasniewski, Aleksander, 41380, 41510, 41608, 41657, 41707, 41750, 41832, 41839, 41872, 41976, 41978
Kwon O Kie, 41773, 41537
Kwon Ro Gap, 41496, 41688
Kwon Yong Hae, 41642
Kwon Young Gil, 41958
Kwon Young Il, 41443
Kwun Sook Il, 41773, 41537
Kyaw Ba, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Kyaw Din, U, 41870
Kyaw Min, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Kyaw Than, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Kyaw Than, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Kyaw Win, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Kyi Aung, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Kyi Maung, 41963
Kyprianou, Spyros, 41929
Kyselyov, Vasyl, 41508
Kyuma, Fumio, 41591, 41640, 41815

L

Léjeune, Jérome, 41783
Lévêque, Jean Maxime, 41649
López Gutiérrez, Carlos Hernán, 41631
López Michelsen, Alfonso, 41857
López, Alioto, 41769
López, Almabeatriz Rengifo, 41583
López, Leopoldo, 41768
Laínez, Francisco, 41683
Laíno, Domingo, 41811
La Guardia, Florio, 41902
La Rosa, Leonor, 41632
Lacheb, Mafoud, 41712
Lacroix, Roch, 41438
Lafontaine, Oskar, 41512, 41599
Lage Dávila, Carlos, 41858
Lahad, Gen. Antoine, 41889
Lahnstein, Anne Enger, 41881
Lai Van Cu, 41822
Lake, Anthony, 41436, 41485, 41529, 41727
Lakrori, Maqo, 41748
Lal, Bhajan, 41820
Lal, Kishore, 41914
Lalika, Mian Abdul Sattar, 41740
Lallah, Saraf Dutt, 41721
Lalov, Ivan, 41506
Lalumiére, Catherine, 41469, 41703
Lam Woon-kwong, 41447
Lamar, Jorge, 41811
Lamari, Gen. Mohammed, 41843, 41892
Lambrecks, Eefje, 41466
Lame, Qemal, 41876
Landsbergis, Vytautas, 41976
Landzo, Esad, 41556
Lang, Ian, 41646
Langendries, Raymond, 41696
Lango, Demis, 41645
Langos, Jan, 41750
Lanovoi, Vladimir, see Lanovy, Volodymyr
Lanovy, Volodymyr, 39021, 41551
Lansiquot, Cyprian, 41634
Lapshin, Mikhail, 41550
Larba, Yarga, 41671
Lasaro, Iairo, 41779, 41825, 41968
Lasarte, Valetin, 41602
Laskir, Hacene, 41712
Lasso, José Ayala, 41486, 41570
Latortue, Gerard, 41618
Lawrence, Stephen, 41515
Lawzi, Naser al-, 41566
Lazarenko, Pavlo, 41551, 41610, 41659, 41709, 41751, 41837, 41975
Lazarevic, Radomir, 41455
Lazaryan, Ter-Husik, 41754
Lazo Hernández, Estebán, 41858
Lazutkin, Aleksandr, 41718, 41797
Le Carro, Alain, 41431
Le Chevallier, Jean-Marie, 41696
Le Duc Anh, Gen., 41822, 41961
Le Kha Phieu, Gen., 41961
Le Lay, Patrick, 41514
Le Pen, Jean-Marie, 41560, 41601, 41927, 41971
Le Pensee, Louis, 41695
Le Huy Ngo, 41822
Le Minh Huong, 41822
Le Ngoc Hoan, 41822
Leach, Jim, 41436
Leakey, Richard, 41851, 41901
Lebed, Aleksandr, 41457, 41507, 41550, 41837
Lebed, Aleksei, 41457
Leblanc, Nic, 41532
Lee Hae Koo, 41773
Lee Hoi Chang, 41537, 41737, 41773, 41817, 41863, 41910, 41958
Lee Hong Koo, 41443, 41537
Lee Hsien Loong, 41968
Lee Hwan Gyun, 41537, 41773
Lee Hyo Kye, 41773
Lee Jung Yon, 41773
Lee Ki Ho, 41773
Lee Kuan Yew, 41450, 41546, 41778, 41968
Lee Myong Hyon, 41773
Lee Soo Sung, 41496, 41537
Lee Suk Chae, 41444
Lee Sung Yon, 41773
Lee Ta-wei, 41639, David, 41770
Lee Teng-hui, 41446, 41541, 41639, 41690, 41732, 41769, 41810, 41814, 41911
Lee Ul Sol, Marshall, 41495
Lee Yock Suan, 41450
Lee Yon Suk, 41773
Lee, Allen, 41960
Lee, Bill Lann, 41951
Lee, Charles, 41447, 41733
Lee, Martin, 41590, 41639, 41733, 41814, 41861
Lee, Spike, 41727
Leelerc, Henri, 41696
Lefouba, Grégoire, 41801
Leghari, Farooq Ahmed, 41447, 41448, 41587, 41692, 41775, 41819, 41913, 41965
Legisi, Ndre, 41748
Leigh, Baila, 41944
Leijonborg, Lars, 41563
Leimann, Jaak, 41552
Leka Zogu, 41597
Lekota, Patrick "Terror", 41947
Lemani, Dumbo, 41721
Lemine, N'Gue Dah, 41944
Len Wanbao, 41689
Lenelgau, Jean-Marie Leye, 41645
Lenin, Vladimir, 41709
Leon, Moshe, 41982
Lepikson, Robert, 41608
Lerner, Jaime, 41810
Lessig, Lawrence, 41952
Letourneau, Gilles, 41728
Leung Chun-ying, 41733
Leung, Anthony, 41447, 41733
Leung, Elsie, 41493, 41733
Leung, Lawrence, 41447
Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, Sabine, 41782
Levchenko, Sergei, 41753
Levi, David, 41518, 41614, 41714, 41755, 41794, 41840, 41841, 41890, 41939
Levi, Itzhak, 41940
Levi, Noel, 41825
Levolo, Boniface, 41579
Lewenqila, Militoni, 41779
Lewis, Vaughan, 41634
Leye, Jean-Marie, 41920
Lhagvansuren, Sodnomyen, 41548
Li Changchun, 41813
Li Lanqing, 41813, 41912
Li Peng, 41492, 41493, 41540, 41589, 41638, 41690 41732, 41771, 41814, 41816, 41818, 41909, 41912
Li Ruihuan, 41492, 41813
Li Tieying, 41813
Li Wei, 41689
Li Wenming, 41690
Li Xiannian, 41860
Li Zhongming, 41689
Li, Andrew, 41639
Liao Cheng-hao, 41770
Libaridian, Jirair, 41835
Libarnes, Gen. Benjamin, 41870
Lieberman, Avigdor, 41614, 41937, 41982
Liekendael, Eliane, 41466
Lien Chan, 41541, 41639, 41738, 41770, 41861
Lien Khiu Thin, 41546
Likulia Bolongo, 41573, 41621
Lilic, Zoran, 41555, 41655, 41705, 41748, 41833, 41875, 41933, 41978
Lilletun, Jon, 41881
Lilley, Peter, 41648, 41700, 41885
Lim Chang Yuel, 41773, 41909, 41537
Lin Cheng-chih, 41770
Lin Feng-cheng, 41770
Lin Fong-cheng, 41639
Linenger, Jerry, 41666
Ling, Syargey, 41458, 41509
Lini, Fr Walter, 41645
Lipponen, Paavo, 41830
Lisovsky, Sergei, 41609
Lissouba, Pascal, 41624, 41671, 41723, 41759, 41800, 41848, 41896
Liszkai, Peter, 41750
Liu Bang-you, 41639
Liu Chao-shiuan, 41770, 41960
Liu Gangqi, 41770
Liu Huaqing, 41813, 41814, 41492, 41595
Liu Shan-chung, 41541, 41639
Liu Shaoqi, 41491
Liu, Zhongli, 41540
Livingston, Bob, 41890
Livshits, Aleksandr, 41549
Lloyd George, David, 41886
Lobendahn, Vincent, 41779
Lobov, Oleg, 41549
Lodkin, Yury, 41457
Loh, Christine, 41639

Lohani, Prakash Chandra, 41544, 41692, 41864, 41964
Loi, Gen. Bruno, 41783
Loik, Rein, 41552
Lokima, Amela, 41573
Lone, Abdul Gani, 41820
Longhouser, John, 41676
Lortkipanidze, Vazha, 41710
Los, Kubulan, 41779
Lotodo, Francis, 41432
Lott, Trent, 41437, 41807
Louima, Abner, 41765, 41808, 41808
Louisy, Perlette, 41813
Loumouamou, François, 41896
Low Thia Khiang, 41450
Lower, Eldbjorg, 41881
Lowry, Michael, 41601
Loyola, Gustavo, 41767
Loza, Remedios, 41680
Lu, Annette, 41541
Luangi, Celestin, 41622
Lubin, Eric, 41896, 41947
Lucinschi, Petru, 41460, 41509, 41552, 41550, 41611, 41660, 41710, 41751, 41832, 41879
Lucky, Anthony, 41490
Lui, Frank, 41872
Lui, Jerry, 41447
Lukashenka, Alyaksandr, 41458, 41459, 41509, 41550, 41659, 41660, 41751, 41785, 41838, 41839, 41879, 41923
Lukashow, Alyaksandr, 41838
Lumumba, Juliane, 41669
Lumumba, Patrice, 41800
Lun Maung, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Lun Thi, Brig.-Gen., 41963
Lungu, Capt. Stephen, 41850
Luniku, Kristaq, 41597, 41789
Luo Gan, 41813
Lus, Pita, 41548, 41779
Lustiger, Cardinal Jean-Marie, 41828
Lutokuta, Gilberto Buta, 41576
Lux, Josef, 41872
Luxton, John, 41967
Luz, Zotilia, 41491
Luzhkov, Yury, 41459, 41975
Ly, Sekou, 41944
Lyabedzka, Anatol, 41381, 41509
Lyakh, Ivan, 41458
Lyambo, Abraham, 41947
Lyavonaw, Vasil, 41458, 41923
Lykketoft, Mogens, 41651, 41784
Lymon, Brig. (retd) Leslie, 41724
Lytvak, Oleh, 41752, 41975
Lyubimov, Vyacheslav, 41457

M

M'barek, Sghair Ould, 41944
M'bat, Mohamed Lehacene Ould, 41944
M'beri, Martin, 41896
M'Daghri, Abdelkebir Alaoui, 41796
M'Daghri, Driss Alaoui, 41796
M'hiham, Achaitou Bint, 41944
M'Kindia, Kirugi, 41432
Ma Ying-jeou, 41639
Ma, Yuzhen, 41690
Ma'alim Ali, Muhammad, 41852
Maatouq, Maatouq Mohammed, 41568
Mabiala, Pascal Tsaty, 41801
Mabior, Izaya, 41482
MacAulay, Lawrence, 41679
Maceda, Ernesto, 41686
Machado Ventura, José Ramón, 41858
Machar, Riak, 41627, 41761, 41449
Machimura, Nobutaka, 41815
Machinga, Gabriel, 41722
Machungwa, Peter, 41801, 41948
Mackay of Clashfern, Lord, 41797
Macki, Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi, 41981
Madani, Abassi, 41756, 41843
Madariaga, Julian, 41783
Madfa, Hamad Abdul Rahman al-, 41569
Madikizela-Mandela, Winnie, 41575, 41802, 41898, 41947
Madisson, Tiit, 41924
Maecha, Mtara, 41948
Magalhães, Antoñio Carlos, 41439, 41488
Magar, Balaram Gharti, 41820, 41864, 41964
Magen, David, 41614
Magill, John, 41969
Magnaga, Martin Fidéle, 41480
Magouindi, Joachim Mahots, 41480
Magureanu, Virgil, 41607
Mah Bow Tan, 41450
Mah, Mohamed Mahmoud Ould, 41944
Mahamane, Sani Bako, 41673, 41945
Mahanta, Prafulla Kumar, 41691, 41820
Maharaj, Mac, 41623
Maharaj, Satpal, 41691
Mahathir Mohamed, Ali, 41595, 41823, 41868, 41870, 41911, 41917, 41962, 41963
Mahdi Mohammed, Ali, 41432, 41627, 41949
Mahele Lyoko Bokungu, 41525, 41621
Mahendra Raya Yadav, 41544
Mahesh Chaudhari, 41544
Mahjub, Adil, 41673
Mahn Sha, 41594
Mahood, Jackie, 41926
Mai, David, 41548
Maia, João, 41633
Maibawa, Castan, 41548, 41779
Maigari, Bella Bouba, 41624
Maina, Michael, 41502
Mainali, Radka Krishna , 41544
Mainassara, Brig.-Gen. Ibrahim Barre, 41433, 41579, 41673, 41725, 41899, 41945
Mainssara, Ibrahim Barre, 41725
Maiyaki, Ahmadou, 41673
Majali, Abdel Salam al-, 41566, 41794
Majid Ahmad, Dayf Abd al-, 41716
Majid, Ali Hassan al-, 41472
Major, John, 41468, 41515, 41562, 41599, 41646, 41648, 41648, 41700, 41744, 41885
Makarovs, Vladimirs, 41510, 41785, 41924
Makeychyk, Uladzimir, 41458
Makiyevskii, Nikolai, 41693
Makosso, François-Luc, 41896
Maksymowicz, Wieslaw, 41872
Maksyuta, Nikolai, 41457
Maktoum, Shaikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-, 41569
Maktoum, Shaikh Maktoum bin Rashid al-, 41569
Maktoum, Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-, 41569
Maktoum, Shaikh Rashid bin Said al-, 41569
Makuwila, Robson, 41623, 41721
Makwetu, Clarence, 41575, 41623
Malafeyew, Anatol, 41551
Malainine, Mohamed Lemine Ch'bih Ould Cheikh, 41944
Malaj, Arben, 41557, 41597, 41748
Malambo, Vincent, 41801
Malan, Gen. Magnus, 41430
Malashenko, Igor, 41787
Maldonado, Luis Eduardo, 41954
Malebranche, Rudolphe, 41812
Malewezi, Justin, 41721
Maleyev, Valery, 41457
Malherbe, Clarel Désiré, 41721
Malik, Alexander John, 41499
Malik, Lt.-Gen. (retd) Abdul Majid, 41740
Malik, Yaseen, 41820
Malima, Philemon, 41947
Malla, Hasta Bahadur, 41449
Mallet, Sir George, 41813
Malocho, Nasoro, 41478
Malone, Gerry, 41886, 41926
Malott, John, 41917
Malu, Voctor, 41528
Maluf, Paulo, 41533, 41729
Malungo, Albino, 41576
Mamadou, Tandja, 41433
Mamaloni, Solomon, 41502, 41645, 41779
Mamoepa, Ronnie, 41623
Mampoya, Michel, 41896
Mamradze, Peter, 41660
Mamser, Muhammed Khair, 41566
Mancera, Miguel, 41953
Mandela, Nelson, 41430, 41477, 41479, 41482, 41573, 41575, 41621, 41623, 41670, 41690, 41713, 41758, 41761, 41778, 41802, 41804, 41805, 41852, 41891, 41898, 41947
Mandela, Winnie, see Madikizela-Mandela, Winnie
Mandelson, Peter, 41646, 41647, 41780
Mane, Abdu, 41673
Mane, Arafan, 41673
Mane, Karine, 41966
Mane, Samba Lamine, 41673
Maneva, Evdokiya, 41653
Manevich, Mikhail, 41786, 41836
Mangoush, Mohammed Ahmed al-, 41983
Mankahlana, Parks, 41430
Manley, John, 41679
Manley, Michael, 41536
Mannie, Ronnie, 41779
Manning, Patrick, 41490
Manning, Preston, 41532, 41678
Mansaray, Maj. A. Y. J., 41944
Mansour, Abdul Malek, 41664
Mansur, Abdol Latif, 41866
Manthari, Yahya bin Mahfudh al-, 41981
Mantovanis, Andreas, 41929
Manucharian, Ashot, 41922
Manuel, Trevor, 41527
Manueli, Col. Paul, 41779
Mao Zedong, 41813
María Argaña, Luis, 41767, 41906
Mar'ie Muhammad, 41918
Mara, Ratu Finau, 41779, 41920
Mara, Ratu Sir Kamisese, 41741, 41779
Maran, Murasoli, 41587
Marandi, Ali Reza, 41715
Marchais, Georges, 41927
Marchal, Ann, 41466
Marchi, Sergio, 41679
Marchiani, Jean-Charles, 41696
Marcos, Ferdinand, 41685, 41824, 41869, 41962
Marcos, Sub-Commandante, 41441, 41809
Maree, Jacko, 41670
Marga, Andrei, 41977
Mariano, Gen. Clemente, 41962
Marincek, Lojze, 41554
Marinkovic, Tonchi, 41768
Marino, Leonardo, 41466
Marjanovic, Mirko, 41503
Marker, Jamsheed, 41778
Markovic, Mirjana, 41503, 41875
Marleau, Diane, 41679
Marouf, Azaly Ben, 41579
Marovic, Svetozar, 41748
Marsden, William, 41906
Marsipal, Arnold, 41548
Marsters, Tom, 41968
Martí, Julio, 41534
Martin, Michael, 41699
Martin, Paul, 41486, 41679, 41855
Martínez Busch, Adml (retd) Jorge, 41858, 41906
Martínez, Alfredo, 41585
Martinez, Jorge Luis Marroquin, 41681
Marusic, Tomaz, 41554
Marusicek, Lojze, 41554
Marwa, Muhammad, 41434
Marx, Ruben, 41430
Marxer, Norbert, 41603
Marynich, Mikhail, 41458
Marzoug, Mohamed Salem Ould, 41944
Mas Canosa, Jorge, 41907
Masani, Tukape, 41968
Masar, Vladimir, 41977
Masashi Suzuki, 41539
Masheke, Gen. Malimba, 41851
Masire, Sir Ketumile, 41758, 41803, 41899
Maskhadov, Aslan, 41458, 41508, 41610, 41659, 41786, 41975
Maslov, Pavel, 41458

Masol, Vitaly, 41509
Masri, Munther al-, 41566
Masri, Taher al-, 41796, 41936
Massaquoi, François, 41625, 41760
Massaquoi, Roland, 41760
Masse, Marcel, 41679
Massera, Adml (retd) Emilio, 41858
Massieu, Mario Ruiz, 41489, 41534
Masud, Ahmed Shah, 41411, 41451, 41500, 41542, 41588, 41635, 41693, 41739, 41774, 41818, 41966
Masyuk, Yelena, 41659
Matiba, Kenneth, 41674, 41627, 41762, 41901
Matiliauskas, Rolandas, 41510
Matingou, Cecile, 41896
Matoka, Marcel Doupamby, 41480
Matos Azócar, Luis Raúl, 41905, 41957
Matsch, Richard, 41581, 41727, 41765, 41808
Matskevich, Uladzimir, 41458
Matsuki, Shimpei, 41640
Matsushita, Renzo, 41539
Matsushita, Yasuo, 41908
Mattioli, Paolo, 41598
Matutes Juan, Abel, 41971
Matutes, Abel, 41462, 41536
Maulana, Alavi, 41692
Maung Aye, Lt.-Gen., 41684, 41915
Maung Bo, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Maung Hla, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Maung Maung Khin, Vice-Adm., 41915
Maung Maung Thein, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Maung Maung, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Maung Thint, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Mauro, Gilmar, 41767
Mawafi, Ramzi Mahmud al-, 41796
Maxon, Miroslav, 41977
Mayaki, Ibrahim Assane, 41673, 41899, 41945
Mayhew, Patrick, 41467
Mayor Oreja, Jaime, 41783, 41926
Maystadt, Philippe, 41466
Mazreku, Gafur, 41834
Mbatha, Cyril, 41802, 41898
Mbaya, Etienne, 41669
Mbaye, Parfait, 41526
Mbayi, Babi, 41622, 41669
Mbega, Monica, 41478
Mbeki, Thabo, 41525, 41573, 41623, 41802, 41947
Mbela, Darius, 41432
Mbelle, Yves, 41946
Mbemba, Theophile, 41759
Mbenga, Musa, 41529
Mbewe, Patrick, 41721
Mbilinyi, Simon, 41478
Mboweni, Tito, 41574
Mbremaidou, Christophe, 41481
Mbuma, Nangolo, 41529
McAleese, Mary, 41886
McAliskey, Bernadette, 41516
McAliskey, Roisin, 41516, 41563
McCain, John, 41854
McCracken, Brian, 41600
McCreevy, Charlie, 41699, 41979
McCully, Murray, 41967
McDaid, Jim, 41699
McDermott, Jim, 41437
McDonough, Alexa, 41678
McDougal, James, 41485, 41579, 41901
McDougal, Susan, 41086, 41485, 41901
McGauran, Peter, 41824
McGillis, Donna, 41630
McGreevey, James, 41902
McGuinness, Martin, 41648
McGuirk, Anne, 41558
McHugh, Brian, 41970
McKinney, Sgt.-Maj. Gene, 41486, 41629, 41727,
McKinnon, Don, 41645, 41967
McLaren, Richard, 41581, 41630, 41903
McLarty, Thomas, 41579
McLauchlan, Lucille, 41841, 41889
McLellan, Anne, 41679
McMaster, Gordon, 41781, 41925
McVeigh, Timothy, 41581, 41676, 41727, 41765, 41808, 41952
Mdalose, Frank, 41430
Mebara, Atangan Jean-Marie, 41946
Mecham, Evan, 41808
Mechrane, Rabia, 41712
Meciar, Vladimir, 41607, 41656, 41706, 41750, 41791, 41831, 41872, 41873, 41931, 41977
Mediresh, Mehdi Meftah, 41568
Mediu, Fatmir, 41934
Medjahed, Rachid, 41521
Medlar, Linda, 41952
Megawati Sukarnoputri, 41450, 41595, 41643
Meghji, Zakia Hamdan, 41478
Mégret, Bruno, 41514, 41560
Mégret, Catherine, 41514
Meier Comejo, Ludwig, 41731
Mejdani, Rexhep, 41747, 41789, 41934
Mejia, Gilberto Echeverri, 41533
Meksi, Alexander, 41454, 41505, 41556, 41789, 41876
Meksi, Ermelinda, 41748
Meles Zenawi, 41761, 41897, 41949
Melescanu, Teodor, 41706, 41791
Melikyan, Gennady, 41708
Melingui, Roger, 41946
Melniks, Vasilijs, 41460
Menasra, Abdelmadjid, 41712
Mendes, Antonio Jesus Simao, 41673
Mendoza, Héctor Cifuentes, 41442
Mendy, Dominque, 41529
Menem, Carlos Saúl, 41440, 41532, 41680, 41730, 41767, 41857, 41906
Mengal, Amirul, 41588
Mengistu Haile Marian, 41482
Mentavlos, Jeanie, 41437, 41808
Menzir, Necdet, 41702
Mera, Roberto Gómez Mera, 41681
Mercep, Tomislav, 41834
Merchant, Piers, 41562, 41885, 41925, 41969
Meri, Lennart, 41510, 41552, 41608, 41881, 41924
Merida, Mario Alfredo, 41769
Meridor, Dan, 41471, 41518, 41714, 41755
Merin, Rywka, 41941
Merino, Wilson, 41907
Merlano, Antonio Gómez, 41533
Merrem, Gerd, 41693
Merritt, John, 41581
Merton, Robert, 41893
Mesapilu, Roben, 41779
Messer, Kim, 41437, 41808
Messinger, Ruth, 41808, 41902
Methogo, Emmanuel Ondo, 41480
Metodiev, Veselin, 41653
Mette-Yapende, Jean, 41481
Meurtz, Paul, 41843
Meyer, Roelf, 41623, 41722, 41758, 41802, 41850
Meysonnier, Jérome, 41464
Mezer, Gazi Ibrahim Abu, 41765
Mezerag, Madani, 41843
Mfoumou, Edouard Akame, 41946
Mgqali, Sitembele, 41623
Mian, Ajmal, 41965
Michaelides, Alexandros, 41603
Michaelides, Constantine, 41929
Michaelides, Michael, 41929
Michalek, Nikolaus, 41465
Michel, Mario, 41634
Michel, Mohamed Ould, 41944
Michel, Robert, 41436
Michelini, Rafael, 41679
Middayn, Furayh Abu, 41471, 41519, 41662, 41714
Mifflin, Fred, 41679
Miguil, Abdallah Abdillahi, 41950
Miguil, Hassan Farah, 41950
Mikhailov, Viktor, 41549, 41842
Mikhailov, Vyacheslav, 41549
Mikhailov, Yevgeny, 41457
Mikhalchanka, Alyaksandr, 41458
Mikhaylova, Nadezhda, 41653
Mikhov, Mikho, 41703
Miklavcic, Franc, 41932
Mikolutsky, Yevheny, 41879, 41923
Mikula, Igor, 41834
Milacic, Borislav, 41748
Mildren, Dean, 41967
Milentijevic, Radmila, 41503
Millares, Edgar, 41768
Miller, Carol, 41630
Miller, Thomas, 41877
Millon, Charles, 41597
Mills, David, 41925
Mills, Iain, 41467
Mills, Janet, 41452
Mills, John, 41759
Milo, Paskal, 41748, 41789
Milongo, Albert, 41671
Milosevic, Marko, 41875
Milosevic, Slobodan, 41414, 41454, 41503, 41606, 41655, 41705, 41748, 41749, 41790, 41791, 41833, 41874, 41875, 41933, 41934, 41978
Milutinovic, Milan, 41454, 41555, 41834, 41978
Min Thein, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Minani, Jean, 41478, 41950
Minchenko, Anatoly, 41752
Minchin, Nick, 41871
Minkin, Aleksandr, 41921
Minnig, Michel, 41533
Minnih, Col. Ahmed Ould, 41944
Mir, Javid, 41820
Mirani, Aftab Shaban, 41965
Mirjanic, Dragljub, 41790
Mirozoyev, Ghaffor, 41866
Mish'al, Khalid, 41841, 41890
Mishra, Chaturanan, 41587, 41691
Mishra, Janeshwar, 41587, 41691
Misic, Slobodan, 41933
Missambo, Paulette, 41480
Misuari, Nur, 41735
Mitchell, George, 41826
Mitchell, Keith, 41732
Mitina, Viktoriya, 41921
Mitsuzuka, Hiroshi, 41539, 41592, 41617, 41640, 41815, 41960
Mitterand, François, 41601
Mitterand, Mazarine, 41601
Mitterrand, Jean-Christophe, 41897
Mityukov, Ihor, 41508, 41752
Miyakou, Antoine Mboumbou, 41480
Miyanda, Brig.-Gen. Godfrey, 41948
Miyanda, Godfrey, 41948
Miyanda, Samuel, 41948
Miyazaki, Kuniji, 41688
Miyet, Bernard, 41474
Mkandawire, Mayinga, 41721
Mkapa, Benjamin, 41478, 41806
Mladic, Ratko, 41655
Mo'ayyeri, Ali Reza, 41888
Mo'in, Mostafa, 41792
Moada, Mohammed, 41473
Moanda, Jean-Claude, 41896
Mobutu Sese Seko, 41431, 41477, 41525, 41561, 41573, 41621, 41669, 41674, 41723, 41759, 41800, 41896
Mockus, Antanas, 41631
Moctar, Kane Amadou, 41944
Modise, Joe, 41623
Modise, Tandi, 41575
Moeketsi Seipei, Stompie, 41802
Mogae, Festus, 41479, 41899
Mohajerani, Seyyed Ata'ollah, 41716, 41792
Mohamed, Ahmed, 41673
Mohamed, Col. Mohamed Daifalla, 41664
Mohamed, Said Ali, 41948
Mohammed, Abderemane, 41948
Mohammed, Abdullai Youssef, 41949
Mohammed, Brig.-Gen. Garba Ali, 41946
Mohammed, Hussein Maalina, 41432
Mohammed, Mohammed Ali, 41950
Moharoof, Mohammed, 41740
Mohebollah, Mowalwi Hafez, 41452

Moi, Daniel arap, 41432, 41674, 41627, 41720, 41725, 41762, 41805, 41851, 41900, 41949
Moily, Veerappa, 41820
Moisescu, Sorin, 41791
Mokelu, Chief Ike, 41946
Mokhehle, Ntsu, 41528, 41575, 41670, 41758
Moleleki, Monyane, 41670
Moller, Per Stig, 41517
Mollok, Bernard, 41825
Molloy, Pat, 41515
Molterer, Wilhelm, 41465
Momah, Brig.-Gen. Samuel, 41946
Momanyi, P.K., 41432
Momoh, Joseph, 41724
Mondo, Ludger, 41779, 41968
Mondragon, Josu de, 41463
Monroy, Hernando, 41631
Monsanto, Pablo, see Soto, Jorge
Monsengwo Pasinya, Laurent, 41621
Montaño, Cecilia López, 41533
Montalto, John Attard, 41559
Montazeri, Ayatollah Hossein Ali, 41939, 41980
Montealegre, Eduardo, 41856
Montesinos, Vladamir, 41582, 41681
Montoy, Irineo Tristan, 41677
Montoya, Robert, 41431
Montri Danphaibun, 41777
Moopanar, G.K., 41587
Moore, John, 41871
Moran, Commander Rolando see Ramírez, Ricardo
Moratinos, Miguel Angel, 41519, 41614, 41794
Morauta, Sir Mekere, 41968
Morawski, Eugeniusz, 41872
Mordechai, Itzhak, 41470, 41564, 41673, 41713, 41755, 41794, 41795, 41842, 41890, 41982
Morgan, John, 41898
Mori, Yoshiro, 41815, 41910
Moriarty, Michael, 41827
Moriau, Patrick, 41696
Moroz, Oleksandr, 41878, 41923
Morris, Dave, 41700
Morris, John, 41647
Morsan, Sergej, 41834
Moskova, Ema, 41653
Moskowitz, Irving, 41840
Mosquera, Guillermo Alberto González, 41440, 41487, 41533
Mostovoi, Petr, 41920
Motando, Col. Yves Mongo, 41896
Mothibamele, Lesedi, 41803
Motlanthe, Kgalema, 41947
Moto, Severo, 41675, 41723, 41760, 41803
Motorin, Mikhail, 41921
Motpan, Dumitru, 41460, 41552, 41710
Motshabi, Paul, 41670
Motzfeldt, Jonathan, 41830
Moukagani, Gen. Augustin Momnbo, 41848
Moukagni, Brig.-Gen. Augustin Mombo, 41760
Moumine, Ali, 41852
Moumouni, Aïssata, 41673, 41945
Mousa, Ali bin Mohammed bin, 41981
Mousaddak, Adberrazak al-, 41797
Mousioutas, Andreas, 41929
Moussa, Amr Mohammed, 41627
Moussa, Issa, 41945
Moussa, Issoufou Aba, 41945
Moussa, Pierre, 41896
Moussaoui, Lahcene, 41712
Moussavi, Hossain, 41888
Moustapha, Lt.-Col. Illo al-, 41945
Moutawakil, Nawal al-, 41797
Mowlam, Mo, 41647, 41648, 41745, 41781, 41826, 41926, 41970
Moya, Carlos Hermoza, 41533, 41583
Moylan, Judi, 41871
Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, 41485
Moyo, Mevin, 41721
Moyo, Simon, 41722
Mozafar, Hossein, 41792
Mpamba, David, 41948
Mpasu, Sam, 41721
Mpinganjira, Brown, 41721
Mporogonyi, Kilonzo, 41478
Mpoyo, Pierre-Victor, 41669
Msika, Joseph, 41850
Msimang, Mendi, 41947
Mtaweh, Samir, 41566, 41663, 41841
Mtintso, Thenjiwe, 41947
Muñoz Ledo, Porfirio, 41809
Mualla, Shaikh Humaid bin Ahmed al-, 41569
Muammari, Col. Malek bin Sulaiman al-, 41981
Muammari, Gen. Ali bin Majid al-, 41981
Mubarak, Hosni, 41474, 41518, 41564, 41627, 41662, 41713, 41755, 41794, 41840, 41841, 41900, 41935, 41939
Mubengai, Francisco, 41575
Mucic, Zdravko, 41556
Mudavadi, Musalia, 41674
Mudhiddinov, Azimjon, 41866
Mueller, Peter, 41882
Mufamadi, Syndey, 41575
Mugabe, Robert, 41479, 41624, 41674, 41721, 41801, 41850, 41898, 41948
Muhammad, Abd al-Jabbar Tawfiq, 41793
Muite, Paul, 41627, 41851
Mujuru, Joyce, 41722
Mukalayi, Banza, 41525
Mukhamedzhanov, Baurzhan, 41867
Mukhlisi, Yusupbek, 41493
Mukunda Neupane, 41544
Mulanda, Mathew, 41948
Mulbah, Joe, 41724
Mulinge, Jackson, 41432
Muller, Marc, 41560
Mulongo, Matambu, 41759
Mulqi, Hani, 41566
Mulroney, Brian, 41438, 41855
Muluzi, Bakili, 41574, 41623, 41721, 41898
Mumbi, Maj-Gen. Moses, 41948
Munap, Dato Selamat Haji, 41595
Mungomba, Dean, 41897
Mungra, Motilal, 41769
Muraoka, Kanezo, 41815
Muratovic, Hasan, 41455
Murdani, Gen. Benny, 41778
Murdoch, Rupert, 41446
Murerwa, Herbert, 41801
Murillo, Javier, 41768
Murphy, James, 41970
Murr, Michel, 41663
Murray, Vice-Adml. Larry, 41728, 41809
Muruli, Solomon, 41483
Musa, Capt. Solomon, 41724, 41944
Musavi-Lari, Seyyed Abdolvahed, 41793
Musayev, Alnur, 41636
Museveni, Yoweri, 41433, 41477, 41627, 41761
Musiyaka, Viktor, 41837
Musonge, Peter Mafany, 41946
Mussolini, Vittorio, 41698
Musyoka, Stephen Kalonzo, 41578, 41852
Mutalibov, Ayaz, 41460, 41510
Mutarika, Bingu wa, 41435, 41579
Muteka, Fernando Faustino, 41575
Mutombo, Tshibal, 41669
Mwanamwambwa, Amusa, 41801
Mwila, Benjamin Yoram, 41851, 41948
Mya Thinn, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Myakayaka-Manzini, Mavivi, 41947
Myasnikovich, Mikhail, 41458
Myboto, Zacharie, 41480
Myburgh, Abraham, 41430
Myeni, Musa, 41430
Myint Aung, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Myint Aung, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Myint Swe, 41776
Myo Aung Thant, U, 41776
Myo Nyunt, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Mzimba, Ibrahim Ali, 41948
Mzunda, Matembo, 41721

N

N'Kili, Edouard, 41526
N'Tchasso, Nharebat Ninaia, 41673
Nabassoua, Yacouba, 41673, 41945
Naciri, Zoulika, 41797
Nadir, Asil, 41467
Naezon, Walton, 41779
Nagasuyama, Tadakazu, 41539
Nagle, Robert, 41548, 41779
Nahayan, Shaikh Zaid bin Sultan al-, 41482, 41569, 41981
Nahimana, Ferdinand, 41477
Nahnah, Mahfoud, 41664
Nahayan, Shaikh Hamdan bin Zayed al-, 41569
Nahayan, Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al-, 41569
Naidu, Yarram, 41587
Najafi, Mohammed Ali, 41793
Najib, Bin Abdul Razak, 41918
Najilah, Adnan Abu, 41940
Najja, Raouf, 41473
Nakaba, Thomas Derry, 41830
Nakajima, Hiroshi, 41618
Nakama, Hitoshi, 41640
Nakamura, Hirokazu, 41862
Nakanga, Wenham, 41528
Nakasone, Yasuhiro, 41815
Nako, Charley, 41645
Naletilic, Mladen "Tuta", 41556
Nali, Michael, 41548, 41779, 41967
Nally, Derek, 41886
Namaliu, Sir Rabbie, 41968
Namazi, Hossein, 41792
Namburete, Antonio Paulo, 41950
Namdar-Zanganeh, Bijan, 41792
Nanagas, Vitaliano, 41546, 41595
Nanagulyan, Garnik, 41711
Nanga, Ferdinand Mawapanga Mwanda, 41622
Nano, Fatos, 41557, 41704, 41747, 41789, 41876, 41934, 41979
Napo, Samson, 41548, 41779
Napoko, Armando Antonio, 41673
Napolitano, Giorgio, 41973
Narayanan, K. R., 41740, 41775, 41864, 41914, 41964
Nasha, Margaret, 41803
Nasher, Abdullah Abdul Wali, 41664
Nasir, Sardar Yaqub Khan, 41740
Nasiri, Obeid bin Saif al-, 41569
Nasrallah, Hadi Hasan, 41754, 41841
Nasrallah, Shaikh Hasan, 41754, 41795, 41840, 41888
Nastase, Adrian, 41706, 41873
Natarajan, Jayanti, 41691
Nateq-Nuri, Ali Akbar, 41661
Nath, Dharma Gian, 41721
Natshe, Mustafa, 41714
Naumovski, Vlado, 41654
Navarro, Carlos, 41884
Navarro, Wilfredo, 41442
Navitski, Genadz, 41458
Nawakwi, Edith, 41801
Nayar, Guido, 41768
Naybari, Abdullah al-, 41716
Nazarbayev, Nursultan, 41542, 41589, 41636, 41693, 41741, 41818, 41867, 41912
Nazarov, Aleksandr, 41457
Nazarov, Talbak, 41542
Nazdratenko, Yevgeny, 41708, 41753, 41975
Nbafou, Claude-Joseph, 41946
Nbizi, Isaie, 41432, 41526
Ndadaye, Melchior, 41801
Ndadye, Melchior, 41622
Ndaitwah, Netumbo, 41628
Ndalla-Graille, Claude-Ernest, 41896
Ndaya, Gidas, 41576
Ndayisaba, Joseph, 41622
Ndhlovu, Francis, 41759
Ndi, John Fru, 41577, 41624
Ndiayé, Diakité Fatoumata, 41804

Ndiaye, Iba, 41577
Ndimira, Pascal-Firmin, 41622, 41851
Ndioro a Yomba, Justin, 41946
Ndizeye, Jean-Luc, 41432
Ndjoy, Albert Ndjavé, 41480
Ndocaj, Engjell, 41557
Ndoricimpa, Rogatien, 41622
Ndrianasolo, Capt., Corvette, 41579
Ne Win, 41684, 41821, 41915
Necas, Petr, 41656
Nedelin, Gennady, 41457
Nedkov, Milan, 41704
Neeman, Yaakov, 41248, 41471, 41662, 41755, 41889
Negasso Gidada, 41949
Negri, Antonio, 41744
Neil, Sir Patrick, 41925
Neiss, Hubert, 41910
Nek Bunchhay, 41683, 41776, 41821
Nematzoda, Mufti Haji Amunullo, 41818
Neme, Abdallahi Ould, 41482, 41626, 41673
Nemtsov, Boris, 41549, 41609, 41658, 41708, 41753, 41786, 41836, 41912, 41920, 41974
Nenovski, Tome, 41605
Nenta, Bob, 41644
Netanyahu, Binyamin, 41469, 41471, 41517, 41518, 41564, 41613, 41662, 41713, 41714, 41754, 41793, 41796, 41839, 41841, 41889, 41890, 41937, 41939, 41981
Neto, Antonio Pitra Costa, 41575
Neto, Pedro Hendrick Vaal, 41576
Newton, Tony, 41646
Neyelov, Yury, 41457
Neykov, Ivan, 41605, 41653
Neziri, Menef, 41654
Ngala, Noah Katana, 41432
Ngaralbaye, Monique, 41626, 41900
Ngarbaroum, Edgar, 41626
Ngari, Idriss, 41480
Ngasonga, Juma, 41351, 41401, 41478
Ngcobo, Sipho, 41528
Nge Ma Ma Than, 41776
Ngeze, Hasan, 41721
Nghenda, Raphael, 41573
Nghimtina, Erkki, 41947
Ngie, Omar, 41529
Ngjela, Spartak, 41557, 41876
Ngo Xuan Loc, 41822
Ngolle, Elvis Ngolle, 41946
Ngombe, Capt. Pierre, 41896
Ngongi, A. Namanga, 41862
Ngoua, Norbert, 41896
Ngoulou, Felix, 41896
Ngubane, Ben, 41430, 41758
Nguele, Mannze, 41896
Nguele, Rene Nze, 41946
Nguema, Teodoro Obiang, 41674
Nguyen Hoang Linh, 41868
Nguyen Hoi, 41917
Nguyen Minh Triet, 41961
Nguyen Phu Trong, 41961
Nguyen Trung Truc, 41917
Nguyen Van Linh, 41961
Nguyen Vinh Thuy, 41777
Nguyen, Cong Tan, 41822
Nguyen, Dinh Loc, 41822
Nguyen, Khoa Diem, 41822
Nguyen, Manh Cam, 41822
Nguyen, Manh Kiem, 41822
Nguyen, Minh Hien, 41822
Nguyen, Sinh Hung, 41822
Nguyen, Tan Dung, 41822
Ngyuen, Tien Thang, 41823
Nhatitima, Sinai, 41950
Nhung Seap, 41642
Niamy, Mambou Elie, 41896
Niandou, Harouna, 41673, 41945
Niandou, Ide, 41945
Nibantunganya, Sylvestre, 41669
Nicholl, Peter, 41875
Nichols, Terry, 41676, 41808, 41952
Nicholson, Baroness Emma, 41898
Nicholson, Harold J., 41531, 41677
Nicholson, Pamela, 41634
Nichyparovich, Uladzimir, 41458
Nickles, Don, 41437
Niculae, Cristian Ion, 41934
Niewoudt, Giddeon, 41430
Niitsoo, Viktor, 41924
Nikitinas, Vladas, 41552
Nikolayev, Andrei, 41542, 41974
Nikolayev, Mikhail, 41457
Nikolits, Istvan, 41554
Nindanga, Gen. Masasu, 41896
Nishad, Rai Narayan, 41587
Nishimura, Shingo, 41640, 41960
Nitschke, Philip, 41452
Niyazov, Saparmurad, 41548, 41666, 41739, 41866, 41966
Niyonsaba, Ambroise, 41762
Njoya, Rev. Timothy, 41720
Nkate, Jacob, 41803
Nkili, Gen. Edouard, 41671, 41760
Nkombo, Nguila Mougounga, 41801
Nkomo, John Landa, 41722
Nkurunziza, Pascal, 41622
Nlend, Henri Hogbe, 41849, 41946
Nobadov, Ata, 41966
Noguera, Gen. Silvio Rafael, 41811
Nolan, Lord, 41744
Nong Duc Manh, 41822
Nookhwun, Jaroong, 41545
Norman, Denis, 41624
Norman, Hinga, 41528
Note, Kessai, 41452
Nottage, Bernard, 41535
Noui, Ahmed, 41712
Noumazalaye, Ambroise, 41723
Noura, Mohamed, 41712
Nouri, Hojatolislam Abdollah, 41792
Nouri, Mahamat, 41626
Novak, Vasil, 41458
Nowak, Manfred, 41555
Noyer, Christian, 41836
Nozawa, Shohei, 41908
Nsabimana, Sylvain, 41721
Nse, Amancio Gabriel, 41723
Nsengiyunva, Anatole, 41477
Ntabakuze, Aloys, 41721
Ntahobali, Shalom, 41721
Nuaimi, Najib Mohammed al-, 41716
Nuaimi, Rashid Abdullah al-, 41569
Nuaimi, Shaikh Majed bin Saeed al-, 41569
Nugent, Ricardo, 41632
Nuia, Brig.-Gen. Leo, 41741
Nujoma, Sam, 41628, 41947
Nur, Aden Abdullai, 41949
Nuri, Anwar Abdullah al-, 41892
Nuri, Sayed Abdullo, 41635, 41693, 41738, 41818, 41913
Nuriyev, Aga, 41612
Nurkadilov, Zamabek, 41774
Nussle, Jim, 41727
Nvodo, Ayeki, 41577
Nyachae, Simeon, 41432
Nyasulu, Kamudoni, 41435
Nyerere, Julius, 41574, 41762
Nyiramasuko, Pauline, 41721, 41801
Nyunt Thein, Commodore, 41915
Nyunt Tin, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Nyunt Khin, 41684
Nzabahimana, Franois, 41669
Nze, Pierre, 41896
Nziengui, Patrice, 41480
Nzimbi Ngale, 41621
Nzo, Alfred, 41670, 41761
Nzobonimpa, Vital, 41622
Nzogibwani, Augustin, 41478
Nzohabonayo, Vénérand, 41622

O

O'Donoghue, John, 41699
O'Leary, Hazel, 41951
O'Neill, Diarmuid, 41970
O'Rourke, Mary, 41699
O'Scannlain, Diarmuid, 41580
Oaten, Mark, 41886, 41926
Oba, Col. Pierre, 41896
Obame, André Mba, 414880
Obame-Nguema, Paulin, 41435, 41480
Obasanjo, Gen. Olusegun, 41945
Obiang Nguema, Teodoro, 41723
Obrador, Andrés Manuel López, 41441
Obst-Oellers, Ina, 41651
Obuchi, Keizo, 41815
Ocalan, Abdullah, 41877
Ocampo, José Antonio, 41905
Ocampo, Raúl Granillo, 41680
Ochi, Ihei, 41815
Ochirbat, Punsalmaagiyn, 41638, 41690
Oddsson, David, 41861
Odinga, Raila, 41578, 41674, 41949
Odlum, George, 41634
Odyev, Pirkuly, 41739
Ogata, Sadako, 41477, 41478, 41800
Ogi, Adolf, 41718
Ogunlade, Chief Ayo, 41946
Oh Ik Je, 41773
Oh In Whan, 41773, 41537
Ohn Gyaw, U, 41736, 41915
Ohn Myint, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Ojha, Devi Prasad, 41544
Ojha, Siddhiraj, 41964
Okamitsu, Nobuharu, 41539
Okamoto, Kozo, 41519, 41566, 41754
Oki, Hiroshi, 41815
Okoudou, Martin Aristide Leopold, 41946
Okuda, Hiroshi, 41467
Okuda, Tadashi, 41736
Okulov, Valery, 41708
Ola, Shees Ram, 41587, 41691
Olarenwaju, Maj.-Gen. Tajudeen, 41945
Ole Ntimama, William, 41432
Oleinikov, Genadz, 41459
Oletta, José Felx, 41534
Olmert, Ehud, 41471
Olsen, Caroline, 41677
Olszewski, Jan, 41832
Omar, Dullah, 41623, 41670
Omar, Idi Ali, 41673, 41725, 41945
Omar, Mola Mohammad, 41693, 41739
Omi, Koji, 41815
Omotunde, Soji, 41849
Ona, Francis, 41741, 41779, 41871
Ondoa, Sylvester Naah, 41946
Ondoua, Pious, 41946
Onobo, Fulgor, 41576
Onyszkiewicz, Janusz, 41872
Oovel, Andrus, 41552, 41839, 41881
Opimba, Leon Alfred, 41896
Opindi, Alfred, 41721
Opmann, Mart, 41552
Orazov, Ashyr, 41966
Orban, Viktor, 41831
Orejuela, Miguel Rodríguez, 41440
Orlov, Viktor, 41549
Orozi, Hassan, 41761
Ortíz Urculo, Juan, 41649
Ortega Lara, José Antonio, 41742, 41783
Ortega Saavedra, Daniel, 41442, 41729, 41856
Ortega, Isabel, 41956
Ortiz Montenegro, Patricio, 41811
Ortiz, Alejandor, 41766
Ortiz, Guillermo, 41766, 41953
Osaulenko, Oleksandr, 41752
Osborne, Betrand, 41769
Osho-Williams, Cecil, 41944
Osmani, Ekeren, 41597
Osmani, Rufi, 41835
Ospel, Marcel, 41976

Ossetoumba, Itihi Lekounzou, 41896
Ostapenko, Dmytro, 41752
Osteen, William, 41580
Oswald, Eduard, 41927
Osyka, Serhy, 41752
Ot, Patteson, 41779
Othman, Abdul-Rahman Mohammed Ali, 41663
Otsuki, Takeshi, 41445
Otto, Robert, 41903
Otunbayeva, Roza, 41738
Ouaidou Guelendouksia, Nassour, 41626
Ouandaogo, Bana, 41672
Oubandawaki, Ousmane Issoufou, 41673, 41945
Ouedraogo, Ablasse, 41671
Ouedraogo, Eli, 41672
Ouedraogo, Kadre Desire, 41671
Ouedraogo, Mahamoudou, 41672
Ouko, Robert, 37239, 38563, 41432
Oumarou, Moussa, 41945
Ousmane, Mahamane, 41433
Ouyahia, Ahmed, 41473, 41712, 41796
Ovchinnikov, Yaroslav, 41785, 41838
Oviedo Silva, Gen. (retd) Lino César, 41443, 41767, 41811, 41857, 41906, 41955
Owais, Humaid Bin Nasir al-, 41569
Owana, Gregoire, 41946
Owona, Joseph, 41946
Oye'Mba, Casimir, 414880
Oyeles, Wole, 41481
Oyone, Ferdinand Leopold, 41946
Oyono, Miguel, 41803
Ozato, Sadatoshi, 41815
Ozawa, Ichiro, 41591, 41687, 41959
Ozergin, Nedim, 41973
Ozkan, Husamettin, 41702
Ozolins, Leopolds, 41657
Ozsoy, Halil Ibrahim, 41702

P

Paúcar, Antonio, 41956
Pacheco, Col. Mario Raúl Hong, 41809
Padilha, Eliseu, 41633
Paeman, Hugo, 41501
Paeniu, Bikenibeu, 41825
Pagrotsky, Leif, 41468
Pahad, Aziz, 41690
Pahadi, Moti Prasad, 41449, 41820, 41864, 41964
Pahlawan, Gen. Malik, 41635, 41693, 41819, 41866, 41913
Pai Hsiao-yen, 41639
Pai Ping-ping, 41639
Pakumeyka, Yury, 41458
Palacios Alcocer, Mariano, 41809
Palermo, Domingo, 41488
Palika, Thomas, 41779
Palme, Olof, 41970
Palmer, Philip Sylvester, 41529
Palubicki, Janusz, 41872
Pan Aung, U, 41915, 41963
Pandolfi Arbulu, Alberto, 41956
Pandy, Andreas, 41885
Pangolos, Theodoros, 41455, 41556, 41789
Panina, Yelena, 41708
Panja, Kesornthong, 41916
Papadakis, Efstathios, 41929
Papandoniou, Ioannis, 41928
Papon, Maurice, 41475, 41797, 41884, 41893
Paqiet, Gerard, 41514
Paraga, Dobroslav, 41791
Paraina, Auguste, 41579
Parajuli, Rajiv, 41449, 41544, 41820, 41864, 41964
Pardo, Bernardo, 41643
Parizeau, Jacques, 41630
Park Jae Yoon, 41537
Park Kwan Yong, 41773
Park Sang Bum, 41773, 41537
Park Seong Yawng, 41444
Park Suk Tae, 41593
Park Tae Jung, 41592
Parkanova, Vlasta, 41461
Parker Bowles, Camilla, 41780
Parra, William, 41954
Parrinello, Danilo, 41769
Parry, Deborah, 41841, 41889, 41936
Parvez, Raja Nadir, 41740
Pascal, Joaquín, 41783
Paschke, Karl, 41477
Pashchenko, Eduard, 41507
Pasqual, Siegfried, 41836
Pastor Perafan, Justo, 41441, 41533
Paswan, Ram Vilas, 41587
Patasse, Ange-Félix, 41481, 41576, 41624, 41849
Patel, Lilian, 41721
Patijn, Michiel, 41517
Patten, Chris, 41447, 41493, 41590, 41638, 41639, 41732
Patterson, Percival J., 41731, 41769, 41956
Paudyel, Bishnu Prasad, 41544
Paul, Henri, 41780
Paulauskas, Arturas, 41976
Paunescu, Adrian, 41832, 41873
Pavic, Mark, 41790
Pavihi, Aukuso, 41872
Pavlov, Aleksandr, 41867
Pawar, Sharad, 41448, 41637, 41691
Pawlak, Waldemar, 41872
Pawlowski, Alyaksandr, 41458
Paxon, Bill, 41726
Paz Zamora, Jaime, 41680
Paznyak, Alyaksandr, 41458
Paznyak, Zyanon, 41923
Pedrozo, Gustavo, 41811
Peeroo, Adbool Razack Mahamed Ameen, 41721
Peiris, G. L., 41865, 41962
Pejanovic-Djurisic, Milica, 41748
Pelika, Tom, 41968
Pellón, Juan Alberto Perote, 40616, 40747, 40839, 41698
Pen, Sovan, 41683
Pena, Federico, 41531, 41842
Penalosa, Enrique, 41856
Penchev, Vladimir, 41703
Peng Tso-kuei, 41770, 41639
Peng Wang-ru, 41639
Peng, Zhen, 41589
Pennington, Prof. Hugh, 41600
Penza, Ronald, 41478
Peprah, Kwame, 41483
Pereira, Francisca, 41673
Pereira, Humberto Belli, 41442
Peres, Shimon, 41614, 41714
Pereye, Zacherie, 41946
Pérez, Andrés Rodríguez, 41586
Pérez Balladares, Ernesto, 41904
Pérez de Cuéllar, Javier, 41768, 41811
Pérez Yoma, Edmundo, 41906
Perisic, Momcilo, 41455
Perote Pellón, Col. Juan Alberto, 41742
Perpali, Lush, 41557, 41748
Perron, Marc, 41856
Perron, Sandra, 41438
Perry, Ruth, 41724
Persak, Anton, 41932
Persson, Goran, 41468, 41830
Peters, Winston, 41548, 41687
Petersen, Niels Helveg, 41555, 41660
Peterson, Douglas "Pete", 41642
Peterson, Thage G., 41468
Peto, Ivan, 41607, 41656
Petrides, Konstandinos, 41929
Petroff, Andre Pitra, 41575
Petrossian, Leonard, 41835, 41922
Petrov, Khristo, 41832
Petrov, Viktor, 41550
Pettersson, Christer, 41970
Pettigrew, Pierre, 41679
Pham Gia Khiem, 41643
Pham Thanh Ngan, 41961
Pham Van Dong, 41961
Pham Duc Kham, 41823
Pham Gia Khiem, 41822
Pham Van Tra, 41822
Phan Dien, 41961
Phan Van Khai, 41867, 41916, 41961
Phan Ung, 41684
Phan Van Khai, 41822
Philemon, Titus, 41548, 41968
Philip, Danny, 41502, 41779
Phillips, Hillson, 41634
Phillips, Lord Justice Sir Nicholas, 41969
Phillips, William, 41893
Phinyawatana, Thermchai, 41545
Phiri, Bundaunda, 41623
Phiri, George Bundaunda, 41721
Phithak Intharawitthayanan, 41868
Phone Myint, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Phuchana Primanot, 41868
Phumaphi, Joy, 41803
Phumisa, Kaliyoma, 41721
Phuoc, Pham Huy, 41450
Pickering, David, 41779
Pieri, Charles, 41463
Pierre, Eric, 41732, 41769, 41859, 41907, 41956
Pierre, Philip J., 41634
Piesi, Jackson, 41779
Pietrewicz, Miroslaw, 41553
Pietrostefani, Giorgio, 41466
Piks, Rihards, 41510, 41707
Pilani, Abdul, 41721
Pilip, Ivan, 41706, 41977
Pilot, Rajesh, 41448, 41637, 41691
Pin, Chakkaphak, 41545
Pina Moura, Joaquim, 41926
Pindling, Lynden, 41535
Ping, Jean, 41480
Pinochet Ugarte, Gen. Augusto, 41811, 41858, 41906
Pirinski, Georgi, 41453
Pirot, François, 41466
Pitta, Celso, 41532, 41729, 41954
Pitts, Earl Edwin, 41531, 41677
Pizarro, Harold Bedoya, 41681
Plavsic, Biljana, 41555, 41705, 41748, 41790, 41833, 41874, 41933, 41979
Plesu, Andrei, 41978
Pluzynski, Maciej, 41931
Poca, Aija, 41510, 41785
Pochinok, Aleksandr, 41609
Podobnik, Janez, 41932
Podobnik, Marjan, 41554
Pohamba, Hifikepunye, 41628, 41947
Pok, Fabian, 41779, 41968
Pol Pot, 41683, 41733, 41776, 41870
Poletti, Roger, 41649
Poljsak, Marjan, 41932
Pollo, Genc, 41597, 41747, 41876
Poluyanov, Nikolai, 41457
Polyzogopoulos, Christos, 41462
Ponce, Diego, 41486
Pongpol, Adireksarn, 41916
Poos, Jacques, 41794
Popkovich, Roman, 41837
Popov, Mihai, 41751
Popovska, Zlatka, 41654
Portal León, Marcos J., 41858
Porter, Dame Shirley, 41969
Portillo, Michael, 41467, 41646, 41648
Portocarrero, Juan Carlos Esquerra, 41441
Poss, Joachim, 41927
Potanin, Vladimir, 41549, 41752, 41785, 41836, 41920, 41974
Pozgalev, Vyacheslav, 41457
Pradhan, Bharat Kumar, 41544
Préval, René, 41490, 41682, 41732, 41769, 41812, 41859, 41907
Prachuab Chaiyasarn, 41919
Prakapovich, Pyotr, 41458
Prammer, Barbara, 41465
Pratt, Elmer "Geronimo", 41677
Prem Tinsulanonda, 41734, 41777, 41916
Prendergast, Sir Kieran, 41474
Prescott, John, 41646, 41827, 41969

Previti, Cesare, 41465, 41972
Priebke, Erich, 41522, 41757
Prieto Jiménez, Abel Enrique, 41858
Prieto, Abel, 41490
Primakov, Yevgeny, 41458, 41459, 41521, 41549, 41611, 41665, 41757, 41773, 41785, 41787, 41891, 41938
Prka, Bozo, 41834
Prlic, Jadranko, 41455, 41841
Prochazka, Libor, 41607
Prodi, Romano, 41513, 41596, 41598, 41650, 41655, 41783, 41828, 41883, 41887, 41928, 41972, 41979
Proteau, Christian, 41601
Protzner, Bernd, 41464, 41782
Provenzano, Bernardo, 41105, 41338, 41697, 41829
Prucher, Joseph, 41546
Prukbumrung, Surachi, 41545
Prusiner, Stanley, 41893
Pucko, Ciril, 41456
Puhovski, Zarko, 41834
Punchinilame, Susantha, 41500
Purev, Baastyn, 41690
Purryag, Rajkeswur, 41721
Purvanov, Georgi, 41832, 41876
Pustovoytenko, Valery, 41751, 41787, 41878, 41923
Putra, Hutomo Mandala, 41918
Pyi Sone, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Pynzenyk, Viktor, 41551, 41610

Q

Qa'ud, Abd al-Majad al-, 41983
Qaboos bin Said, Sultan, 41889, 41981
Qader, Gen. Mustafa Abdel, 41755
Qasimi, Shaikh Fahim bin Sultan al-, 41569
Qhobela, Molapo, 41758
Qian Qichen, 41445, 41493, 41494, 41589, 41732, 41813, 41860, 41948
Qiao Shi, 41492, 41813
Qidra, Khaled, 41714
Qin Jiwei, 41493
Qomi, Ayatollah Ahmad Azeri, 41939
Quanyou, Fu, 41638
Quattrocchi, Maria, 41500
Quattrocchi, Ottavio, 41500
Quindel, Barbara Zack, 41766
Quinn, Ruairi, 41468
Quinones, Carlos, 41442
Quintana, Edgard, 41442
Quiroz, Carlos, 41905
Quispe Correa, Alfredo, 41731
Quissangue, Robert, 41673
Qurie, Ahmed, 41565

R

Röder, Manfred, 41971
Röller, Wolfgang, 41829
Rühe, Volker, 41743, 41971
Rabah, Sadok, 41891
Rabbani, Burhanuddin, 41635, 41866
Rabi, Abdessadek, 41796
Rabin, Itzhak, 41714, 41937
Rabuka, Sitiveni, 41645, 41687, 41779, 41825
Radev, Muravey, 41653
Radic, Jure, 41749
Radic, Marko, 41556
Radix, Roger, 41732
Rafsanjani, Ali Akbar Hashemi, 41520, 41612, 41661, 41756, 41792, 41888
Rafsanjani, Mohammed Hashemi, 41792
Raghunath, K., 41819
Rahantalalao, Henriette, 41579
Raharisoa, Juliette, 41579
Rahim, Khwaja Ahmed Tariq, 41448
Rahim, Tayyin Abd al-, 41565, 41714, 41839
Rahman, Farukur, 41449
Rahman, Hamdi Abd al-, 41755
Rahman, Hassan Abd al-, 41627
Rahman, Saifur, 41819, 41865
Rahman, Shaikh Mujibur, 41449, 41548
Rahman, Shaikh Omar Abdel, 41934
Rahmani, Cherif, 41712
Rainer, Peter Paul, 41783
Rainha Junior, José, 41439, 41679
Rajab, Mohammed Ben, 41473
Rajaonarivelo, Pierrot Jocelyn, 41579, 41948
Rajavi, Maryam, 41888
Rajendran, S., 41778, 41823
Rajohnson, Rija, 41579
Rajub, Jibril, 41470, 41614, 41940
Rakad, Rakad bin Salem al-, 41569
Rakhmanov, Imamoli, 41500, 41588, 41589, 41636, 41693, 41738, 41773, 41818, 41867, 41913
Rakkiat, Sukthana, 41916
Rakotoarijaona, Gen. Desire, 41852
Rakotomanana, Honoré, 41477
Rakotomavo, Pascal, 41483, 41579
Rakotonavahy, Soloniaina, 41579
Ralston, Gen. Joseph, 41676, 41727, 41807
Ramadan, Taha Yassin, 41793, 41985
Ramaiah, Bolla Buli, 41587
Ramamantsoa, Herivelona, 41579
Ramamonjisoa, Jaivo, 41579
Ramamurthi, Vazhappadi K., 41964
Rambally, Menissa, 41634
Ramgoolam, Navin, 41570, 41674, 41721
Ramhi, Mohammed bin Seif al-, 41981
Ramírez, Edgar, 41956
Ramírez, Miguel Angel, 41732
Ramírez, Noel, 41442
Ramírez, Ricardo Arnoldo, 41681, 41809
Ramírez Sánchez, Ilich, 41971
Ramoowalia, Balwant Singh, 41587
Ramos Horta, José, 41735
Ramos, Fidel, 41539, 41685, 41735, 41778, 41824, 41869, 41870, 41919, 41962
Ramos-Shahani, Leticia, 41735
Ramoutar, Donald, 41586
Ramsbotham, Gen. Sir David, 41970
Rana, Pashupati S.J.B., 41864, 41964
Rana, Shanti Shumsher, 41864, 41964
Ranariddh, Norodom, 41500, 41545, 41594, 41642, 41683, 41733, 41776, 41821, 41961
Randrianarisoa, Ange, 41579
Rangarajan, Chakrabarty, 41914
Ranimat, Mahmoud, 41566
Ranjakason, M., 41579
Ranjeva, Gen., Marcel, 41579
Rannenberger, Michael, 41731
Rao, P. V. Narasimha, 41448, 41691, 41820
Raqabani, Saeed Mohammed al-, 41569
Ras, Sadiq Amin Abu, 41663
Rashid, Amir Muhammed, 41567
Rasmussen, Poul Nyrup, 41882
Rasnacs, Dzintars, 41510, 41657, 41785
Rasolondraibe, Col., Jean-Jacques, 41579
Rasoza, Charles, 41579
Rata, Matiu, 41741
Ratcliffe, Donald, 41641
Ratnatilleke, Mahinda, 41500
Ratnayake, Hema, 41692
Ratovonelinjafy, Jean Desire, 41579
Ratsifandramanana, Lila, 41579
Ratsirahonana, Norbert, 41483, 41852
Ratsiraka, Didier, 41435, 41483, 41579, 41852, 41948
Ratwatte, Anuruddha, 41692
Ravi, Paritala, 41914
Ravins, Andris, 41785
Raviv, Avishai, 41937
Ravony, Francisque, 41852
Rawahi, Ahmad bin Khalfan bin Mohammed, 41981
Raweh, Abdel-Wahab, 41663
Rawlings, Jerry, 41435
Ray, Dalip Kumar, 41587
Raya, Mahendra, 41964
Razafimahaleo, Herzio, 41579
Reddy, Jai Ram, 41687
Reddy, Jaipal, 41586, 41636
Redmond, Bill, 41630
Redmond, Derek, 41830
Redmond, Martin, 41467
Redouane, Mohammed, 41756
Redwood, John, 41648, 41700
Reeder, Joe, 41810
Rees Jones, Trevor, 41780
Reffell, Victoria, 41528
Rehnquist, William, 41435
Reijan, Viliu, 41552
Reimer, Gen. Dennis, 41807
Reina Idiaquez, Carlos Roberto, 41809, 41814
Remer, Otto Ernst, 41882
Reno, Janet, 41472, 41529, 41568, 41580, 41725, 41806, 41853, 41901, 41951
Rerngchai, Marakanond, 41734
Resende, Iris, 41633
Restad, Gudmund, 41881
Rexrodt, Günter, 41829
Rey, Pepe José Benigno, 41602
Rey, Rafael, 41811
Reyes Villa, Erick, 41768
Reyes, Raúl, 41583, 41857
Reynolds, Albert, 41699, 41745, 41886
Reyshahri, Mohammad Mohammadi, 41661
Rezende, Iris, 41488
Rezes, Alexander, 41607
Reznik, Henry, 41879
Rhayel, Abbas, 41612
Rhee Chul Soo, 41688
Rhee In Je, 41737, 41817, 41910, 41958, 41958
Rhinow, René, 41845
Ri Chong Ok, 41816
Ri Ha Il, 41593
Riady, James, 41725
Ribeiro, Licinio Tavares, 41575
Ribelli, Juan José, 41906
Ricaurte, Ramiro Ricaurte, 41486
Richard, Alain, 41695, 41763, 41950
Richard, Lord, 41647
Richardson, Bill, 41485, 41573, 41630, 41669, 41848, 41896
Richardson, John, 41760
Rifkind, Malcolm, 41440, 41443, 41462, 41492, 41493, 41564, 41646
Riina, Salvatore "Toto", 41829
Rikalovski, Boris, 41654
Rincón, Maxino, 41438
Ritter, Michael, 41603
Rivadeneira, Edgar, 41486
Riyong, Yauwe, 41968
Riza, S. Iqbal, 41474
Rizali, Ismail, 41570
Rizq, Elias Abu, 41615, 41663
Robaina González, Roberto, 41858
Robert, Serge, 41875
Roberts, Charles, 41760
Robertson, George, 41647
Robillard, Lucienne, 416779
Robinson Agramonte, Juan Carlos, 41859
Robinson, Arthur, 41490, 41634
Robinson, Jim, 41515
Robinson, Mary, 41564, 41570, 41649, 41717, 41745, 41827, 41886, 41947
Robleto, David, 41442
Roche, Adi, 41886
Rock, Alan, 41679
Rodionov, Igor, 41507, 41549, 41567, 41609, 41640, 41657, 41687, 41753
Rodríguez Maradiaga, Oscar Andrés, 41766
Rodríguez, Carlos Rafael, 41859
Rodríguez, Rafael Caldera, 41534
Rodríguez, Teresa, 41584
Rogers, S. Y. B., 41944
Rogozin, Dmitry, 41550
Roh Tae Woo, 41444, 41537, 41592, 41817, 41958
Rojas Parra, Freddy, 41957
Rokaya, Bhakta Bahadur, 41449, 41864
Roketsky, Leonid, 41457
Rokhlin, Lev, 41708, 41753, 41837

Rokita, Jan Maria, 41460
Roldán, Luis, 41698
Roman, Petre, 41461
Romer, Roy, 41530
Romero, Sergio, 41870
Romiti, Cesare, 41598
Rop, Tone, 41554
Roqué Villanueva, Humberto, 41809
Rosales del Toro, Gen. Ulises, 41858
Rosales Roman, Ricardo, 41809
Rosales, John D., 41952
Rosenberg, Janet, 41954
Ross Leal, Pedro, 41858
Ross, Denis, 41469, 41565, 41614, 41662, 41794, 41890
Rossel, Eduard, 41708
Rossi, Jean-Michael, 41463
Roth, Kenneth, 41723
Roth, Stanley, 41959
Roth, William V., Jr., 41437
Rowas, Abd al-Aziz bin Mohammed al-, 41981
Rubiano, Pedro, 41857
Rubiks, Alfreds, 41924
Rubin, Robert, 41617, 41814
Rubins, Andris, 41657
Rubinstein, Elyaqim, 41471, 41614, 41890
Rudaynah, Nabil Abu, 41839
Ruddock, Philip, 41644, 41824
Rudlovcak, Vladimir, 41607
Ruggiero, Renato, 41522
Ruggiu, Georges, 41721
Ruhani, Majlis Hasan, 41613
Ruiz, Samuel, 41904
Ruka, Ethern, 41748
Rukingama, Luc, 41721, 41762, 41851
Rumas, Mikalay, 41458
Ruml, Jan, 41656, 41872
Rummelhardt, Jacques, 41742, 41842
Rusakevich, Uladzimir, 41458, 41751
Rushdi, Osama, 41982
Rushdie, Salman, 41520
Russell, Richard, 41531
Russo, Massimo, 41617
Rusy, Mikhail, 41458
Rutskoi, Aleksandr, 41457
Ruttenstorfer, Wolfgang, 41465
Rwamakuba, André, 41801
Ryabets, Mykhaylo, 41923
Ryall, Tony, 41967
Rybkin, Ivan, 41507, 41550, 41610
Ryuichi, Koike, 41687
Ryzhkov, Vladimir, 41837

S

Sa'idi-Kia, Mohammed, 41792
Saba'a, Abdullah Saleh, 41664
Sabha, Rajya, 41586
Sabih, Adil Khalid al-, 41892
Sadat, Anwar, 41520, 41755
Saddam Hussein see Hussein, Saddam
Sadio, Salif, 41803
Sadirov, Bahkram, 41500, 41542, 41818
Sadirov, Rizvon, 41500, 41542, 41818, 41966
Sadyrbayez, Doronbek, 41912
Saemala, Francis, 41502
Saez Montejo, Pedro, 41859
Safir, Howard, 41952
Sagara, Ubumi, 41445
Sahana Pradhan, 41544
Sahel, Mustapha, 41796
Sahhaf, Mohammed Said Kazim al-, 41715
Sahin, Refaiddin, 41703
Sahnoun, Mohamed, 41477, 41515, 41622
Saibou, Ali, 41945
Said, Sayyid Fahad bin Mahmoud al-, 41981
Said, Sayyid Faisal bin Ali al-, 41981
Said, Sayyid Thuwaini bin Shihab al-, 41981
Saidi, Abderrahmane, 41796
Saidou, Mountchipou, 41946
Saidov, Zafar, 41866
Saidy, Njie, 41529
Saikia, Muhi Ram, 41587
Sajjad, Wasim, 41965
Sakamaki, Hideo, 41539, 41640, 41687
Sakani, Henri Mova, 41622
Saket, Bassam, 41566
Sakias, Robert, 41779
Sako, Bakary, 41577
Sakwa, Hamza, 41946
Sala, José Mariá, 41884
Salami, Abdullah bin Mohammed al-, 41981
Salami, Alawi al-, 41663
Salaouandji, Tidjani, 41712
Saleeby, Elias, 41760
Saleh, Abdessalem Ould Mohamed, 41944
Saleh, Ali Abdullah, 41615, 41663, 41756, 41936, 41981
Saleh, Mohammed Mehdi, 41793
Saleh, Rachid Ould, 41944
Salek, Ahmed Salem Ould, 41626
Salifou, André, 41673
Salih, Gen. Salah Muhamad, 41852
Salim Miya Ansari, 41544
Salim, Salim Ahmed, 41574, 41852
Salimov, Yakub, 41773
Salinas de Gortari, Carlos, 41489, 41582, 41631
Salinas de Gortari, Raúl, 41582, 41631
Salinger, Pierre, 41531, 41903
Salissan, André Okombi, 41896
Salvatti, Madriano Herran, 41534
Salvesen, Hugh, 41871
Sam, Rangsi, 41545, 41776, 41961
Samaké, Col. Sada, 41804
Samakuva, Isaias, 41899
Samant, Datta, 41448
Samarai, al-, see Abdulah Fadil Abbas
Samaraweera, Mangala, 41692
Samassekou, Adama, 41804
Samba, Maj. Kula, 41724, 41724, 41944
Sambat, Alexandre, 41480
Samondo, Marcos, 41575
Samoplavsky, Valery, 41752
Sampa, Chitalu, 41948
Samper Pizano, Ernesto, 41225, 41364, 41440, 41487, 41533, 41583, 41631, 41681, 41731, 41766, 41810, 41856, 41905, 41905, 41954
Samperio, Luis Andres, 41602
Samphan Loetnuwat, 41868
Samsonov, Viktor, 41657
Sanan, Kajomprasart, Maj.-Gen. 41916
Sanbar, Samir, 41474
Sánchez Herdocia, Enrique, 41631
Sánchez, Fidel Velázquez, 41682
Sánchez, Gen. César Saucedo, 41582, 41632
Sancristóbal, Julián, 41883
Sandoval, Jeronimo, 41442
Sane, Malal, 41673
Sane'l, Hasan, 41520
Sanguinetti, Rodolfo Muñante, 41583
Sangwa, John, 41897
Sanha, Issuf, 41673
Sanhouri, Ahmed Ould Mustapha Ould, 41944
Sani, Haju, 41946
Sankoh, Foday Saybannah, 41529, 41577, 41672 41849, 41944
Sanoja, Iván, 41957
Sanou, Seydou Baworo, 41672
Sanoussi, Abidine Zainoul, 41899
Sanoussi, Jackou, 41673
Sant, Alfred, 41340, 41559
Santacruz Londoño, José, 41905
Santer, Jacques, 41517, 41522, 41564, 41600, 41651, 41701, 41745
Santiago, Ronivon, 41633
Santiestevan, Jorge, 41632
Santoni, François, 41463
Santorum, Rick, 41629
Santos, Juan Manuel, 41857
Santos, Luiz Carlos, 41811
Saomasi, Lester Huckle, 41779
Sapag, Felipe, 41584
Sarah, Harbi Abu, 41662
Saraiva, Joao Moreira Pinto, 41576
Saraya, Hicham, 41567
Sarkissian, Armen, 41381, 41469, 41551
Sarmiento, Recaredo, 41962
Saro-Wiwa, Ken, 41672, 41849
Sarre, Elie, 41672
Sarsenbayev, Altynbek, 41867
Sarubbi, Vicente, 41488
Sarwar, Mohammed, 41699, 41969
Sasnowski, Alyaksandr, 41458
Sassou-Nguesso, Gen. Denis, 41624, 41671, 41723, 41759, 41800, 41848, 41896
Sato, Koko, 41815
Saucedo Sánchez, Gen. César, 41582, 41731
Saud al-Faisal, Prince, 41794, 41841, 41936
Saud, Sayyid Saif bin Hamad bin, 41981
Sauk, Jimson, 41920
Saul, David, 41537
Saulet, Anicet, 41576, 41671
Saung Tun, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Sausnitis, Atis, 41785
Savanur, Ratnamala, 41691
Savas, Vural, 41652, 41930
Savimbi, Jonas, 41480, 41576, 41671, 41759, 41803, 41850, 41899
Saw Lwin, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Saw Maung, Gen., 41741
Saw Tun, U, 41915
Sawit Bhottiwihok, 41916
Sawoniuk, Andrzej, 41845
Sawyer, Tom, 41781
Sayani, Amid Abdel-Malik al-, 41663
Sayed, Bechir Mustafa, 41713
Sayegh, Hani Abdel Rahim Hussein al-, 41568, 41630, 41677, 41842
Saygin, Isilay, 41703
Sazonaw, Alyaksandr, 41458
Sbai, Abderrahmane, 41796
Scalfaro, Oscar Luigi, 41243, 41559, 41697, 41883, 41949
Scallon, Rosemary, 41886
Scavone, Ubaldo, 41732
Schäuble, Wolfgang, 41882
Schüessel, Wolfgang, 41465, 41754
Schabowski, Günter, 41782
Schaefer, Paul, 41730
Scheidt, Bob, 41581, 41630
Schliemann, Heinrich, 41610
Schlogl, Karl, 41464, 41512
Schmulling, Herbert, 41781
Schneider, Jürgen, 41972
Schneider, Jaromir, 41607, 41656
Scholes, Myron, 41893
Schulte, Dieter, 41560
Schultz, David, 41438
Schultz, Ludwig, 41548
Schutte, Danie, 41802
Schwarz, Charles, 41808
Schweitzer, Louis, 41603
Schyman, Gudrun, 41830
Scilingo, Adolfo, 41858
Scioli, Daniel, 41857
Scott, Andy, 41679
Scotty, Ludwig, 41502
Seaga, Edward, 41956
Sebastião, Gen. Pedro, 41528, 41575, 41722
Sebego, Ronald, 41803
Seckiner, Yucel, 41703
Seddouki, Abdelkader, 41568
Sedivy, Jaroslav, 41872, 41977
Seeger, Norbert, 41554
Sefa, Mujo, 41920
Segal, Nick, 41722
Séguin, Philippe, 41695, 41743, 41971
Seifart, Angel Roberto, 41811, 41906
Seillière de Laborde, Ernest-Antoine, 41971
Sein Aung, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Sein Htwa, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Sein Win, Brig. Gen., 41915
Seipei, Stompie Moeketsi, 41898

Sekiya, Katsutsugu, 41815
Selassie, Amha, 41432
Seleznev, Gennady, 41551, 41609, 41709
Seleznyov, Gennady, 41753, 41880
Selmani, Aslan, 41654
Sembereka, Richard, 41721
Semedo, Odette, 41673
Sementa, Algirdas Gediminas, 41510
Semynozhenko, Volodymyr, 41752
Semyonov, Vladimir, 41609
Senanayake, Dharmasiri, 41692
Sendov, Blagovest, 41453
Seneviratne, John, 41692
Senghor, Fr Diamacoune, 41763
Senic, Valeriu, 41710
Serafinowicz, Szymon, 41475, 41845
Seravo, Viviso, 41779, 41968
Serbanescu, Ilie, 41977
Serdaroglu, Rifat, 41703
Serdyuk, Andry, 41752
Sere, Alassane, 41672
Sereivut, Norodom, 41413, 41500
Sergeyenkov, Vladimir, 41457, 41550
Sergeyev, Igor, 41657, 41708, 41787, 41867, 41922, 41974, 41976
Serna, Eric, 41630
Serov, Valery, 41549
Serpa Uribe, Horacio, 41533, 41631, 41954
Serra Serra, Narcís, 41884
Service, Robert, 41811
Sesay, Umaru Deen, 41724, 41944
Seselj, Vojislav, 41833, 41875, 41978
Seshan, T. N., 41740
Sethi, Najam, 41448
Sevan, Benon, 41474
Severin, Adrian, 41978
Severino, Rodolfo C., 41736
Seydou, Lt.-Col. Abdoul Ramane, 41673, 41945
Sezgin, Ismet, 41702, 41929
Shaath, Nabil, 41794
Shabanov, Ivan, 41457
Shabazz, Betty, 41678
Shabazz, Malcolm, 41678
Shabazz, Qubilah, 41678
Shafei, Gholamreza, 41792
Shah, Asghar Ali, 41499
Shah, Gopalji Jung, 41449
Shah, Sajjad Ali, 41913, 41965
Shah, Syed Ghaus Ali, 41740
Shak'a Riyad, 41566
Shakhrai, Sergei, 41708
Shaklein, Nikolai, 41550
Shakola, Ivan, 41923
Shalikashvili, Gen. John, 41638, 41676, 41727, 41771, 41807
Shallah, Rateb al-, 41715
Shalom, Silvan, 41755
Shami, Ahmed Mohamed al-, 41664
Shamkhani, Rear-Adm. Ali, 41792
Shams, Mohammed Hassan, 41843
Shannon, Alan, 41563
Shara, Farouk al-, 41715, 41938
Sharaf, Ali Humaid al-, 41663
Sharafkandi, Sadegh, 41612
Sharansky, Natan, 41714, 41939
Sharetski, Syamyon, 41551
Sharhan, Ali Abdul Aziz al-, 41569
Shari'atmadari, Mohammed, 41792
Sharif, (Mian) Mohammed Nawaz, 41498, 41543, 41587, 41636, 41666
Sharif, Ali al-, 41755
Sharif, Mahmud Sayyid Ahmed al-, 41755
Sharif, Nawaz, 41740, 41775, 41819, 41865, 41913, 41965
Sharma, Capt. Satish, 41820
Sharma, Rabindra Nath, 41864, 41964
Sharma, Rabindranath, 41544
Sharma, Shankar Dayal, 41543, 41586, 41740
Sharon, Ariel, 41662, 41713, 41714, 41755, 41794, 41890
Sharp, John, 41824
Sharping, Rudolf, 41696
Sharpirov, Salomiddin, 41773
Sharpton, Rev. Al, 41808
Sharshenaliyev, Asanbek, 41694
Shatalov, Sergei, 41921
Shaykh, Maj.-Gen. Abd al-Aziz Al as-, 41936
Shaykhyyev, Ilaman, 41966
Shayler, David, 41780
Shcherban, Volodymyr, 41508
Sheberstov, Oleksy, 41752
Shehi, Dashamir, 41597
Shehu, Agim, 41597
Shehu, Tritan, 41747, 41789
Sheikh, Mze Sheikh ben, 41948
Sheinbein, Samuel, 41890
Shekhar, Chandra, 41914
Shelton, Gen. Henry, 41727, 41807
Sheremet, Pavel, 41751, 41785, 41838, 41879, 41976
Sherifi, Elmas, 41557, 41748
Sherig-ool, Oorzhak, 41550
Sherry, Nick, 41871
Shershunov, Viktor, 41457
Sherwani, Salim Iqbal, 41587, 41691, 41965
Shevardnadze, Eduard, 41509, 41611, 41660, 41661, 41710, 41787, 41878, 41922, 41973
Shields, Thomas, 41778
Shihab, Mufid Mahmud, 41755
Shija, William, 41478
Shikhmyradov, Boris, 41739, 41866, 41888
Shim Chung Woong, 41911
Shimba, Lawrence, 41801, 41948
Shimoinaba, Kokichi, 41815
Shin Kwang Shik, 41496, 41688
Shin Sang Woo, 41537
Shipley, Jenny, 41919, 41967
Shiraishi, Haruki, 41592
Shmakov, Mikhail, 41549
Shoa'aibi, Yahia Mohamed al-, 41664
Shoigu, Sergei, 41549
Shojai, Zahra, 41888
Shokhin, Aleksandr, 41837
Shokrah, Fahd Salem al-, 41793
Shornikov, Petr, 41710
Short, Clare, 41647, 41769, 41813
Shostari, Hojatolislam Ismail, 41792
Shröder, Gerhard, 41599
Shrestha, Chin Kaji, 41449
Shtylla, Kastriot, 41557
Shukla, Sarbendra Nath, 41544, 41820, 41864
Shvedenko, Mykola, 41752
Shwaikhat, Shaikh Jaafar Bin Alhaj Qassem Marqouk al-, 41471
Shymaw, Uladzimir, 41458
Shypuk, Pavel, 41458
Siby, Ibrehima, 41804
Siddhi Lal Singh, 41544
Siddiqui, Maqbool, 41740
Sider, Talal, 41470
Sidi, Baba Ould, 41434, 41944
Sidibé, Maj. Modibo, 41804
Sidibé, Ousmane Oumarou, 41804
Sidikou, Mambo Sambo, 41945
Sidorov, Yevgeny, 41549, 41786
Sidya, Ahmed Kelly Ould Cheikh, 41482
Siebert, Daantjie, 41430
Siegel, Mark, 41530
Sierra Cruz, Jorge Luis, 41859
Siew, Vincent, 41770, 41911, 41960
Sigfried, Maj.-Gen. Richard, 41807
Sihanouk, King Norodom, 41734, 41776, 41821, 41870
Siimann, Mart, 41510, 41552, 41608, 41657, 41881, 41924
Sika, Michael, 41598
Sikatu, Anastacio Ruben, 41575
Silajdzic, Haris, 41455, 41655
Silayev, Boris, 41694
Silva, Héctor, 41535
Silwamba, Eric, 41801
Simão, Viega, 41926
Sim U Yong, 41773
Simann, Mart, 41552
Simeon Vargas Arias, Waldo, 41767
Simitis, Kostas, 41462, 41596, 41745, 41746, 41789, 41876, 41877, 41928, 41934, 41972
Simon, David, 41646
Simonsen, Thorkild, 41882
Simpson, Delmar, 41581, 41629
Simpson, O.J., 41483, 41485
Sin, Cardinal Jaime, 41824
Singatey, Capt. Edward, 41529
Singer, Israel, 41845
Singh, Ajit, 41736, 41820
Singh, Buta, 41820
Singh, Doodnauth, 41954
Singh, Gajendra Narayan, 41544, 41820
Singh, Kalyan, 41820, 41864
Singh, Kanti, 41587
Singh, Naresh Bahadur, 41820, 41864
Singh, Prakas Man, 41964
Singh, Prem Bahadur, 41544
Singh, Raghuvansh Prasad, 41587, 41691
Singh, V. P., 41914
Singha, Gajendra Narayan, 41864, 41964
Singherok, Brig.-Gen Jerry, 41741
Singherok, Jerry, 41547
Sinha, Kamala, 41691
Sinijary, Riivo, 41552, 41608
Sinunguruza, Terence, 41622
Sinyavsky, Andrei, 21402, 41508
Sira, Gen. Sid Ahmed Muhammad, 41852
Siradeghyan, Vano, 41754
Sirisena, Maithripala, 41692
Sistiago, José Luis Urrosolo, 41463
Sitai, David, 41741
Sithole, Rev. Ndabaningi, 41898, 41948
Sivori, Ana María, 41730
Skate, Bill, 41741, 41778, 41825, 41920, 41967
Skegro, Borislav, 41834
Skele, Andris, 41460, 41510, 41608, 41657, 41707, 41751, 41784, 41838
Skinnari, Jouko, 41887
Skinner, Dato Haji Ahmad Wally, 41595
Sklyarov, Ivan, 41753
Skole, Josef, 41554
Skopljak, Pero, 41791
Skou, Jens, 41893
Skrastins, Janiss, 41657
Skreby, Kestutis, 41510
Skuqi, Luan, 41557
Skuraatov, Yury, 41609
Skuratov, Yury, 41785
Sladek, Miroslav, 41553
Slater, Rodney, 41485
Slonari, Vladimir, 41832
Smallman, David, 41586
Smaltz, Donald C., 41764
Smarth, Rosny, 41490, 41536, 41586, 41633, 41682, 41732, 41812, 41859
Smirnov, Igor, 41420, 41460, 41509, 41611, 41660, 41879, 41930
Smith, Chris, 41646, 41647, 41744
Smith, Cornelius A., 41536
Smith, Leo, 41779
Smith, Michael, 41886
Smith, Nick, 41967
Smith, Raúl España, 41491
Smith, Tim, 41562, 41744
Smith, Warwick, 41871
Smoly, Valery, 41752
Smrkolj, Ciril, 41554
Smyrek, Stephan Josef, 41982
Smyth, Fr Brendan, 41745
Snegur, Mircea, 41382, 41419, 41460, 41710, 41879
Sneh, Ephraim, 41714
Snvhev, Kharalambi, 41506
Snyman, Harold, 41430, 41802
So Chong Hwa, 41496, 41537
So Kwan Hi, 41910
So Yun Sok, 41816
Soames, Nicholas, 41494, 41515

Soares, Mario, 41612
Socrates, José, 41926
Soe Myint, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Soe Tha, U, 41915, 41963
Soe Win, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Sofan, Ahmed Mohamed, 41664
Sofiyanski, Stefan, 41506, 41558, 41604, 41653
Sofri, Adriano, 41466
Sogavare, Manassah, 41779
Sohn Hak Kyu, 41537
Soilihi, Mohamed Ali, 41805, 41948
Sokolov, Yordan, 41652
Sokolovic, Zoran, 41455, 41555
Sokona, Mohammed Salia, 41804
Soksok, Vital, 41645
Solórzano, Cuauhtémac Cádenas, 41489
Sol, Armando Calderón, 41535
Solana Madariaga, Javier, 41749
Solana, Javier, 41521, 41665, 41756, 41874
Soljic, Vladimir, 41555
Solo, Capt., 41851
Solomis, Khristos, 41603
Solomon, Mahteme, 41674
Solorzano Constantine, Carlos, 41731
Solorzano, Carlos, 41583
Solovyov, Anatoli, 41797
Soltani, Bouguerra, 41712
Somare, Sir Michael, 41686, 41741
Somboon, Rahong, Air Chief Marsha, 41916
Somlyay, Alex, 41871
Somsak, Thepsuthin, 41868, 41916
Somu, N. V. N., 41587, 41914
Son Ji Yol, 41688
Son Sen, 41776, 41683
Sondji, Jean-Baptiste, 41622
Song Hong Kyun, 41496
Song Min Sun, 41773
Song Tae Ho, 41773, 41537
Song Yong Sik, 41538
Sonnenberger, Heinz, 41941
Sono, Lolo, 41898
Soonarane, Sachindev Mahess Kumar, 41721
Soong, James, 41446, 41770
Sope, Barak, 41645
Sopuaga, Saufatu, 41825
Sorensen, Gillian, 41474
Sorgdrager, Winnie, 41754
Soros, George, 41550, 41659, 41823, 41838, 41869, 41880, 41902, 41963
Soto García, Jorge Ismael, 41809
Soto, Jorge, 41681
Sotomayor, Benigno, 41486
Soufani, Khalid, 41935
Souflias, Giorgios, 41559
Souley, Abdoulaye, 41673, 41945
Sow, Ibrahima, 41673
Sow, Sy Kadiatou, 41804
Sowry, Roger, 41967
Soyinka, Wole, 41528, 41625, 41849
Soylemez, Ufuk, 41746
Soz, Salifuddin, 41587
Spaho, Vasillaq, 41557
Spaine, Manley, 41724, 41944
Spasov, Gjorgji, 41654, 41704
Spence, Floyd, 41437
Spicer, Tim, 41547, 41596
Spicka, Jiri, 41607
Spiridonov, Yury, 41922
Spitaels, Guy, 41466, 41560
Spiteri, Lino, 41559
Spitzfaden, Marilyn, 41765
Sponheim, Lars, 41881
Spring, Dick, 41516, 41649, 41926
Squillacote, Theresa, 41855
Stadthagen, Robert, 41442
Stalev, Stoyan, 41506
Stamps, Timothy, 41624
Stanakzai, Sher Mohammed, 41451, 41452
Stanculescu, Athanasie, 41655
Stanik, Syuzanna, 41787
Stanimirovic, Vojislav, 41555, 41605, 41705
Stankevich, Sergei, 41609
Stanoevski, Borko, 41654
Starodubtsev, Vasily, 41550
Starova, Arjan, 41557
Starovoytov, Vasily, 41923
Starr, Kenneth, 41485, 41530, 41579, 41675, 41726
Stavrinakis, George, 41929
Stazhaw, Vasil, 41458
Steel, Helen, 41700
Steele, John, 41600
Steensgaard, Nicky, 41830
Stefani, Simon, 41876
Steiner, Michael, 41704
Steinhoff, Janusz, 41872
Stepashin, Sergei, 41752
Stevens, John Paul, 41629
Stewart, Allan, 41562
Stewart, Christine, 41679
Stewart, Jane, 41679
Stihl, Hans Peter, 41743
Stoilov, Georgi, 41506
Stojicic, Col.-Gen. Radovan "Bazda", 41606, 41875
Stoltenberg, Jens, 41881
Stone, Oliver, 41464
Stone, Shane, 41548
Stoyan, Oleksandr, 41710
Stoyanov, Petar, 41453, 41506, 41558, 41703, 41876, 41930
Strand, Roger, 41808
Strang, Gavin, 41647
Strauss-Kahn, Dominique, 41695, 41701, 41742, 41784, 41828, 41929
Straw, Jack, 41646, 41780
Stroyev, Yegor, 41753, 41880
Stuckey, Ian Ling, 41779
Suárez, Hugo Bánzer, 41680
Su Chi, 41639
Subaie, Ahmed Mohammed Ali al-, 41716
Subanov, Murzakan, 41867
Suchman, Tamas, 41332, 41706, 41750
Suchocka, Hanna, 41872
Sudarenko, Valery, 41457
Sudarman, Susilo, 41962
Sudjatmiko, Budiman, 41233, 41413, 41595
Sudrajat Jiwandono, 41778
Suen, Michael, 41638
Suharto, 41758, 41778, 41824, 41869, 41918, 41963, 41450, 41643, 41685
Sukala, Valyantsin, 41458
Sukla, Sarbendranath, 41964
Suleymenov, Kairbek, 41867
Suljic, Munib, 41834
Sultan, Aziz ibn Abdul, 41538
Sultan, Maqbul bin Ali bin, 41981
Sumin, Petr, 41457
Summers, Larry, 41908
Summers, Lawrence, 41540, 41542
Sun Yat Sen, 41813
Sun Zhenyu, 41860
Sunassee, Sathlamoorthy, 41721
Sungurlu, Oltan, 41702
Suntic, Srboljub, 41933
Supatra, Matsdit, 41916
Suphachai, Panitchpakdi, 41916
Surikov, Aleksandr, 41457
Surin, Pitsuwan, 41916
Suryadi, 41595
Susak, Gojko, 41791
Suslov, Viktor, 41752
Sutasn, Ngoenmune, 41916
Suthep, Thuagsuban, 41916
Sutherland, Veronica, 41516
Sutrisno, Try, 41547
Suvar, Stipe, 41874
Suwit Khunkitti, 41868, 41916
Suzuki, Masashi, 41640
Suzuki, Muneo, 41815
Swanepoel, Nick, 41898
Swift, Robert, 41869
Swire, Jim, 41891
Swokin, Kala, 41779, 41968
Sy, Wilson, 41546
Syamujaye, Syamukayumbu, 41801, 41948
Syanko, Uladzimir, 41458
Sydykova, Zamira, 41694
Syed, Mushahid Hussain, 41499
Sylla, Almany Fode, 41761, 41899
Symington, J. Fife, 41580, 41808
Syse, Jan P., 41830
Sysuyev, Oleg, 41549
Szokai, Imre, 41706, 41750
Szyszko, Andrzej, 41872

T

Töpfer, Klaus, 41927
Ta Mok, 41776, 41870, 41545, 41683
Ta Huu Thanh, 41822
Ta Quang Ngoc, 41822
Tabachnyk, Dmytro, 41837
Tabai, Ieremia, 41825
Tabakov, Emil, 41506
Tabara, Arturo, 41870
Tabara, Valeriu, 41832
Tabuchi, Setsuya, 41539
Tabuchi, Yoshihisa, 41539
Tadic, Dusan, 41654, 41749
Tadumi, On'okoko, 41947
Tafaj, Myqerem, 41557
Taffar, Abdelkader, 41712
Taha, Ali Uthman Muhammad, 41852
Taha, Elwaleed, 41675
Taha, Refaei Ahmed, 41982
Taib, Muhammad Muhammad, 41595, 41643, 41685
Taki Abdoulkarim, Mohammed, 41948
Taki, Mohamed, 41805
Takov, Emil, 41506
Takumi, Masaru, 41816
Tal, Georgy, 41921
Talabani, Jalal, 41651, 41877
Talawi, Mirvat Muhanna al-, 41755
Talay, Istemihan, 41702
Talbott, Strobe, 41866, 41917
Talgarbekov, Bekbolot, 41588
Talhi, Jaddallah Azzouz al-, 41983
Tall, Mountaga, 41761
Tam Yiu-chung, 41733, 41447
Tamang, Bhim Bahadur, 41449
Tamang, Buddhi Man, 41864, 41964
Tamba-Tamba, Victor, 41801
Tambo, Oliver, 41802
Tamboura, Ascofaré Ouleymatou, 41804
Tamou, Omar, 41948
Tamraz, Roger, 41530, 41725
Taner, Gunes, 41702, 41929
Tang Guoqiang, 41960
Tang Liang Hong, 41450, 41546, 41685, 41777, 41918
Tang Minh Phung, 41546
Tang Yuanjuan, 41689
Tang, Henry, 41447, 41733
Tanigaki, Sadakazu, 41815
Tapie, Bernard, 40558, 41514
Taranoglu, Ersin, 41702
Taranupi, Muki, 41779, 41920, 41968
Tarar, Muhammad Rafiq, 41965
Tarawneh, Fayez, 41566
Tariceanu, Calin Popescu, 41607
Tariki, Shaikh Abdullah, 41842
Tarnoff, Peter, 41613
Tarrin Nimmanahaeminda, 41916
Tarto, Enn, 41924
Tasar, Mustafa, 41702
Tassoua, Jean-Marie, 41896
Tatawi, Nawal al-, 41568
Taty-Loutard, Jean-Baptiste, 41896
Tavai, Ratu Etuate, 41779
Taya, Mouaouia Ould Sidi Mohammed, 41482, 41626, 41673, 41804, 41944
Tayan, Turhan, 41461
Tayeb, Mohamed M. al-, 41664
Tayer, Ahmed Humaid al-, 41569

Tayer, Matar Humaid al-, 41569
Taylor, Ann, 41647
Taylor, Bob, 41760
Taylor, Charles, 41434, 41528, 41625, 41724, 41760, 41815, 41945
Taylor, Ian, 41885
Tchicaya, Jean-Pierre Thystère, 41801
Tebekaru, Nicolae, 41751
Tegarinski, Mario, 41653
Teixeira, Roberto, 41679, 41730
Tembo, Gen. Christon, 41801, 41948
Temer, Michel, 41488
Temizel, Zekeriya, 41702, 41973
Temperville, Francis, 41884
Tenet, George J., 41530, 41727
Teo Chee Hean, 41450
Ter-Petrossian, Levon, 41510, 41551, 41612, 41661, 41711, 41754, 41787, 41835, 41877, 41878
Terekhov, Stanislav, 41753
Teresa, Mother, 41820
Terraza Pinot, Gen. Rolando, 41809
Terreblanche, Eugene, 41670
Tertz, Abram, 41508
Tesar, Jiri, 41607
Teta, Perikli, 41748
Tewary, K.K., 41691
Thackeray, Bal, 41820, 41965
Thacoor-Sidaya, Indira Savitree, 41721
Thaksin Chinnawat, Police Lt-Col., 41777
Thakur, Mahanta, 41964
Thaler, Zoran, 41554, 41750, 41834
Than Aung, U, 41915, 41963
Than Shwe, Gen., 41642, 41684, 41741, 41870, 41915
Thangathurai, A., 41740
Thani, Shaikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabr al-, 41568
Thani, Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-, 41473, 41716, 41940
Thani, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Hamad al-, 40622, 41473
Thanong Bidaya, 41734, 41777, 41868, 41684
Thapa, Bishnu Bikran, 41864, 41449
Thapa, Kamal, 41449, 41544, 41692, 41820, 41864, 41964
Thapa, Surya Bahadur, 41864, 41964, 41964
Thappharangsi, Kon, 41684
Tharu, Phatte Singha, 41449, 41864, 41964
Thatcher, Baroness Margaret, 41590, 41700
Thaung, U, 41915
Thayer, Nate, 41776, 41870
Thein Nyunt, Col., 41915
Thein Sein, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Thierro, Diarra Hafsatou, 41804
Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Thomas, Capt. Paul, 41944
Thomas, George, 41827
Thompson, Fred, 41725, 41902, 41951
Thomson, Andrew, 41871
Thomson, Harry, 41721
Thondaman, S., 41692
Thura Shwe Mahn, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Thura Thiha Thura Sit Maung, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Thurmond, Strom, 41437
Ti Liang-yang, Sir, 41733
Tian Jiyun, 41813
Tiberi, Jean, 41561, 41743
Tiberi, Xaviére, 41561, 41743
Tibi, Ahmed, 41840
Tiendrebeogo, Alice, 41672
Tiendrebeogo, Joseph André, 41672
Tietmeyer, Klaus, 41754
Tigipko, Serhy, 41610, 41611, 41752
Tijani, Al-Hocine, 41797
Tijanic, Aleksander, 41414, 41503
Tikhomirov, Vladislav, 41457
Tikriti, Maj.-Gen. Kamal Mustafa al-, 41793
Tin Aye, Brig.-Gen., 41915
Tin Aye, Vice-Adm., 41915
Tin Hla, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Tin Hlaing, Col., 41915
Tin Htut, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Tin Ngwe, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Tin Oo, Lt. Gen., 41594, 41684, 41915, 41963
Tin Shwe, U, 41684
Tin Tun, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Tinca, Gheorghe, 41511
Titov, Konstantin, 41457
Tiwari, Hari Shankar, 41865
Tjipilica, Paulo, 41575
Tjiu Mau-ying, 41639
Toan Chay, 41594, 41684
Tocsik, Marta, 41607, 41706, 41750
Todoron, Pavel, 41655
Todorova, Sofija, 41654
Todorovic, Zoran, 41875
Togoimi, Youssouf, 41626
Tohaian, Paul, 41548
Tohbala, Ariya, 41595
Tohira, Kazuo, 41519, 41567, 41754
Tokayev, Kasymzhomart, 41818, 41867
Tolstoukhov, Anatoly, 41752
Tomac, Zrdavko, 41705
Tomaszewski, Janusz, 41872
Tomic, Dragan, 41875
Tomic, Neven, 41455
Tomobe, Tatsuo, 41497
Tomov, Aleksandur, 41506
Tong Bao, 41589
Tonypandy, Viscount, 41827
Toots, Jaan, 41608
Topalovic, Musan, 41933
Topcu, Yasar, 41702
Toporov, Vladimir, 41611
Topothai, Sathorn, 41545
Torres Pérez, Nelson, 41859
Torres, Homero, 41681
Torricelli, Robert, 41484
Tosovsky, Josef, 41656, 41977
Totomirov, Tsvetan, 41703
Tou, Amar, 41712
Tou, Ludovic Alain, 41672
Toumushat, Christian, 41491
Toungui, Paul, 41480
Tounkara, Yahya, 41945
Touray, Yankuba, 41529
Toure, Gen. Amani Toumani, 41481, 41723, 41760
Toure, Sidia, 41899
Tovmasyan, Artur, 41835
Tower, John, 41530
Trairong, Suwannakhiri, 41916
Tran Duc Luong, 41916
Tran Xuan Gia, 41916
Tran Dinh Hoan, 41822
Tran Duc Luong, 41822
Tran Thi Thanh Thanh, 41822
Tran Thi Trung Chien, 41822
Tran Xuan Gia, 41822
Traoré, Aminata Drame, 41804
Traoré, Modibo, 41761, 41804
Traoré, Moussa, 41578, 41804, 41944
Traore, Diacounda, 41761
Traore, Mohamed Lamine, 41761
Traore, Youssouf, 41761
Trautmann, Catherine, 41560, 41695, 41884
Travar, Ranko, 41790
Traylor, Daniel, 41675
Trigo, Alvaro Ramos, 41491
Trimble, David, 41699, 41744, 41781, 41826
Tripathi, Hridayesh, 41820, 41864, 41964
Trofimov, Vasily, 41507
Trojan, Carlo, 41651
Trombev, Tome, 41654
Trovoada, Miguel, 41639
Trpevski, Ljube, 41654
Truché, Pierre, 41463
Trujillo, Carlos Holmes, 41810
Truong Dinh Tuyen, 41822
Truong Vu Xuan, 41642
Truss, Warren, 41871
Tsai Chao-yang, 41770
Tsai Hsun-hsiung, 41770
Tsakh, Nikolai, 41549
Tsang Fan Hin, Tsang Man Kin, 41721
Tsang, Donald, 41493, 41541, 41733, 41911
Tsaranazy, Col., Emile, 41579
Tsaty Boungou, Arsène, 41801
Tsepkalo, Valery, 41550
Tshisekedi, Etienne, 41573, 41621, 41669
Tshombe, Moïse, 41800
Tshwete, Steve, 41947
Tsiba, Col. Florent, 41896
Tsiba, Pierre, 41896
Tsibliyev, Vasiliy, 41617, 41718, 41757, 41797, 41845
Tsokhatzopoulos, Apostolos, 41877
Tsongas, Paul Efthemios, 41438
Tsvetkov,Valentin, 41457
Tudela, Francisco, 41438, 41582, 41730, 41811
Tudjman, Franjo, 41456, 41504, 41605, 41705, 41790, 41791, 41796, 41833, 41875, 41932
Tudor, Corneliu Vadim, 41832, 41873
Tufayli, Shaikh Subhi al-, 41715, 41754, 41937, 41982
Tuleyev, Aman, 41549, 41753, 41786, 41880
Tumanov, Vladimir, 41507, 41609
Tun Kyi, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Tung Chee-hwa, 41409, 41446, 41447, 41493, 41542, 41590, 41638, 41639, 41732, 41814, 41861
Tupou IV, Taufa'ahau, 41646
Tupou, Tevita, 41646, 41825
Tupua Tamasese Efi, Tuiatua, 41645
Turadzhonzada, Ali Akbar, 41542
Turcios, Camilo, 41907
Turgunaliyev, Topchubek, 41452
Turk, Hikmet Sami, 41703
Turkeri, Fevzi, 41702
Turkes, Alpaslan, 41604
Turlais, Dainis, 41510
Turner, Ted, 41845
Turnquest, Orville Alton Thompson, 41536
Turnsek, Tit, 41554
Tursunov, Maj.-Gen. Khimatullah, 41818
Tusha, Qamil, 41597, 41789
Tutu, Most Rev. Desmond, 41623, 41670, 41802, 41898
Tymko, Aleksandr, 41974

U

Ubayd, Atif Muhammad, 41755
Ubayd, Nadya Makram, 41755
Ubaydat, Ahmad, 41796, 41936
Ubaydulloyev, Mahmadsaid, 41636
Udo-Imeh, Air Commodore Ito, 41946
Udovenko, Hennadiy, 41752, 41845
Uesugi, Mitsuhiro, 41815
Ugudov, Movladi, 41236, 41508
Ujiie, Junichi, 41640, 41736
Ukel, Joseph, 41482
Ulayyan, Itaf, 41940
Ulmanis, Guntis, 41460, 41785, 41924
Ulufa'alu, Bartholomew, 41779, 41871
Ulugbay, Hikmet, 41702, 41746
Umblija, Ramona, 41785
Ung Huot, 41917
Unkovski, Slobodan, 41654
Unsi, Ahmad Muhammad al-, 41663
Upton, Simon, 41967
Uray, Benoni, 41760
Urayqat, Sa'ib, 41564, 41614, 41794
Urdinola, Antonio José, 41905
Urinson, Yakov, 41549, 41786, 41921
Urrestarazu Garijo, Igor, 41783
Useni, Lt-Gen. Jeremiah, 41946
Utkin, Vladmir, 41845

V

Védrine, Hubert, 41695
Vagnorius, Gediminas, 41608, 41924
Vahi, Tiit, 41510, 41552

Vaile, Mark, 41871
Vaivods, Einars, 41657
Vakatale, Taufa, 41779
Valásquez, Fidel (alias Don Fidel), 41535
Valdivieso Sarmiento, Alfonso, 41440, 41631
Valdmanis, Gundars, 41657
Valente, Vasco, 41758
Valentim, Jorge Alicerces, 41576
Valiyev, Saparmammet, 41739
Vall, Mohamed Lemine Ould Mohamed, 41944
Valla, Liv-Gerd, 41515
Valladares, Olbán, 41904, 41953
Vallejo, Juana, 41486
van Aartsen, Jozias, 41603
van den Broek, Hans, 41745, 41749, 41972
Van der Merwe, Francois, 41430
Van Der Veer, Walter, 41907
van Dunem Loy, Pedro de Castro, 41576, 41803
van Dunem, Fernando José da Franca, 41575
van Dunem, Pedro José, 41576
van Mierlo, Hans, 41557, 41596, 41651
van Niekerk, Kraai, 41802
van Schalkwyk, Marthinus, 41623, 41802
Vanclief, Lyle, 41679
Vanstone, Amanda, 41871
Vanunu, Mordechai, 41890
Vaohita, Colette, 41579
Varantsow, Genadz, 41458
Vare, Raivo, 41552
Vargas, Alfredo, 41907
Vargas, Virgilio Barco, 41631
Varik, Andres, 41552
Varul, Paul, 41552, 41839
Vasilev, Valentin, 41653
Vasilevich, Rryhor, 41419, 41458
Vasiljevic, Dusan, 41455
Vasilyev, Dmitry, 41920
Vavi, Zwelinzima, 41527, 41850
Vavilov, Andrei, 41507, 41609, 41752
Veidemann, Andra, 41552, 41657
Vekic, Ivan, 41834
Velásquez Sánchez, Fidel, 41535, 41682
Velickovic, Dragutin, 41555
Vellayati, Ali Akbar, 41527, 41569, 41793
Venecia, Jose De, 41919
Venegas, Samual, 41635
Venkateswaralu, U., 41587, 41691
Venkatyaraman, T.G., 41587
Ventura, Mariano, 41442
Venugopalachari, S., 41587, 41636, 41691
Vera, Rafael, 41883
Verduga, César, 41486
Verma, Beni Prasad, 41587
Verma, Chandradev Prasad, 41587
Veroni, Walter, 41828
Vesikula, Ratu Timoci, 41779
Veskmova, Dagmar, 41461
Vesper, Dieter, 41599
Viana, Prisco, 41488
Victor, Correia, 41850
Vidal, Antonio Ketin, 41582
Vidal, Gore, 41464
Videnov, Zhan, 41453, 41506, 41558
Vieira, João Bernardo, 41850
Viggers, Peter, 41515
Vil, Mohammed Yeslem Ould, 41482
Viljoen, Gen. (retd) Constand, 41623, 41670
Villamizar, Rodrigo, 41767
Villanueva Ruesta, Gen. José, 41731
Vincent, Anthony, 41533
Vinkasi, Kinkela, 41622
Vinkelis, Juris, 41510, 41707
Vinnikava, Tamara, 41459, 41923
Vinogradov, Nikolai, 41457
Vinogradov, Pavel, 41797
Virabongsa Ramangura, 41777
Virahsawmy, Devanand, 41721
Viray, Francisco, 41870
Virgil, Charles Wesley, 41490
Vitorino, Antonio, 41926
Vivas, Pedro Nicolas Valencia, 41683
Vlatkovic, Dusan, 41748
Vlok, Adriaan, 41479, 41850
Vo Chi Cong, 41961
Vo Van Kiet, 41961, 41643, 41684
Vo, Van Kiet, 41822
Vodicka, Jindrich, 41872
Vohor, Serge, 41645, 41825, 41871, 41920
Volcker, Paul, 41461, 41845
Volder, Michael, 41830
Volkov, Nikolai, 41457
Vollebaek, Knut, 41881
Volpe, Justin, 41808
von Munchhausen, Baron Klaus, 41941
Von Sydow, Bjorn, 41468
Vorsinov, Hryhory, 41752
Voscherau, Henning, 41599, 41829
Voynet, Dominique, 41695
Vranitzky, Franz, 41464, 41557, 41596, 41653
Vrionio, Dylber, 41597
Vukaj, Shaqir, 41557, 41748
Vulterin, Karel, 41553
Vunibobo, Berenado, 41779
Vurbanov, Ventsislav, 41653
Vyakhirev, Rem, 41658
Vyalichka, Valyantsin, 41838

W

Wa Dondo, Léon Kengo, 41525, 41573
Wa'ays, Elmi Obsieh, 41950
Waberi, Ahmad Guirreh, 41950
Wadda, Mustapha, 41434
Waffa, Susan, 41529
Wagner, Gerd, 41834
Wagner, Guillermo, 41486
Wagner, Jozef, 41706
Wagner, Roberto, 41681
Wahono, 41595
Wai, Simeon, 41779, 41968
Waieng, Peter, 41779, 41968
Waigel, Theo, 41464, 41599, 41650, 41696, 41743, 41781, 41784, 41829, 41927, 41929
Wajeeh, Mohamed al-, 41663
Wako, Haruwo, 41754
Waldegrave, William, 41646
Waldner, Christian, 41783
Walendziak, Wieslaw, 41872
Walesa, Lech, 41872, 41931, 41977
Walker, John, 41893
Walker, William, 41791
Wallstrom, Margot, 41784
Walo, Hario, 41567
Walpole, Robert, 41580
Walpora, Japhet, 41779
Walsh, Joe, 41699
Walubita, Keli, 41801, 41948
Walus, Janusz, 41758
Wama, Jacob, 41779, 41968
Wamalwa, Michael Kijana, 41578, 41627, 41762
Wan Jun, 41485
Wang Baosen, 41814
Wang Chih-kang, 41770
Wang Ke, 41813
Wang Qiliang, 41590
Wang Ruilin, 41813
Wanjik, Paul, 41548
Warakohla, Dick, 41779
Wareing, Bob, 41700
Wasacz, Emil, 41872
Wasmosy, Juan Carlos, 41443, 41488, 41767, 41811, 41857, 41906, 41955
Watanabe, Michio, 41815, 41960
Watoo, Mian Mohammad Yasin Khan, 41740
Watson, Frank H., 41536
Watts, Julius Caesar, 41483
Wazeer, Ismail al-, 41663
Weaver, Robert, 41727
Weeks, David, 41969
Wei Chi-lin, 41770
Wei Jianxing, 41813
Wei Jingsheng, 41912, 41960
Wei Tuan, 41770
Weigl, Jiri, 41656, 41707
Weinrot, Yaakov, 41518
Weinstein, Jack, 41629
Weiss, Birte, 41882
Weizman, Ezer, 41518, 41662, 41889
Weld, William F., 41501, 41807
Wells, Tennyson R.G., 41536
Wen Jiabao, 41813
Wessels, Leon, 41850
West, Togo, 41807
Westendorp, Carlos, 41704, 41790, 41791, 41834, 41874, 41933
Weston, Sir John, 41789
Whelehan, Harry, 41745
Whitehurst, Frederick, 41581
Whitlam, Gough, 41825
Whitman, Christine, 41902
Wibga, Amidou, 41672
Wickremanayake, Ratnasiri, 41692
Wickremasinghe, D.P., 41692
Wickremasinghe, Ranil, 41588, 41821
Widdecombe, Ann, 41562, 41925
Widzyk, Jerzy, 41872
Wiedeking, Wendelin, 41743
Wiese, Thomas, 41808
Wijdenbosch, Jules, 41534, 41769
Wilecki, Tadeusz, 41553
Willey, Kathleen, 41726, 41764
Willi, Andrea, 41603
William, Prince, 41780
Williams, Amy, 41479
Williams, Daryl, 41452, 41871
Williams, Jody, 41893
Williams, Osho, 41724
Williams, Salam, 41944
Williamson, David, 41651
Williamson, Maurice, 41967
Wilson, Ronald, 41644
Win Myint, Lt.-Gen., 41915
Win Sein, U, 41915, 41963
Win Tin, Brig.-Gen., 41915, 41963
Winzeler, Christophe, 41718
Wiranto, 41685
Wisner, Frank, 41842
Wiszniewski, Andrzej, 41872
Wittmann, Peter, 41465
Wnuk-Nazarowa, Joanna, 41872
Woewiyu, Tom, 41625, 41760
Wolde, Worede Woldu, 41674
Wolf, David, 41845
Wolf, Marcus, 41464, 41651
Wolfensohn, James, 41522, 41609, 41617, 41844
Womandiya, Capt. Sahr, 41944
Wong Man Fong, 41639
Wong, Andrew, 41447
Wong, Rosanna, 41447
Woo Chan Mok, 41496, 41688
Woods, Michael, 41699
Woodward, Bob, 41530, 41806
Woodward, Louise, 41854, 41903
Wossen, Merid Azmatch Asfa, 41432
Wossen, Zere-Yakob Asfa, 41432
Wright, Billy, 41970
Wright, Susan Webber, 41764, 41806, 41902
Wu Bangguo, 41813
Wu Guanzheng, 41813
Wu Jin, 41770
Wu Poh-hsiung, 41960
Wu Yi, 41813
Wulff, Christian, 41882
Wureh, Weade, 41528
Xhuveli, Lufter, 41748

X

Xi Yang, 41447
Xiao Yang, 41814
Xie Fei, 41813
Xu Youfang, 41741

Y

Yabrán, Alfredo, 41680
Yadav, Khobari Raya, 41544
Yadav, Lalu Prasad, 41587, 41691, 41739, 41774, 41864, 41964
Yadav, Mahendra Raya, 41864
Yadav, Mulayam Singh, 41587
Yadav, Ram Bilas, 41864, 41964
Yadav, Ram Lakhan Singh, 41820
Yadav, Rameshwor Raya, 41544
Yadav, Sharad, 41691, 41740, 41774
Yagabo, Dibara, 41779, 41968
Yagmurdereli, Esber, 41930
Yah Lin Trie, Charles, 41485, 41580, 41725
Yahia, Habib Ben, 41473
Yakan, Shaikh Amin, 41616
Yaki, Roy, 41778, 41825, 41968
Yama, Peter, 41548
Yamada, Kikuo, 41497
Yamamoto, Mariko, 41567, 41754
Yamamura, Osamu, 41592
Yamani, Ahmed Zaki al-, 41842
Yamasaki, Taku, 41815, 41908, 41960
Yamashita, Shigeru, 41539
Yandarbiyev, Zelimkhan, 41458
Yang Chao-hsiang, 41770
Yang Shih-chien, 41770
Yang Ting-yun, 41770
Yanko, Stanislav, 41752
Yaou, Aissatou Boubakari, 41946
Yar'Adua, Gen. Shehu Musa, 41945
Yasin, Yevgeny, 41549
Yassin, Shaikh Ahmad, 41890
Yastrzhembsky, Sergei, 41785, 41974
Yatom, Ehud, 41755
Yavlinsky, Grigory, 41549, 41921
Yazdi, Ibrahim, 41980
Ye Myint, Maj.-Gen., 41915
Ye, Arsene Bognessan, 41671
Yeaten, Benjamin, 41945
Yefremov, Anatoly, 41457
Yegoryan, Eduard, 41754
Yeh Chin-fong, 41770, 41639
Yekhanurov, Yury, 41508, 41611, 41752
Yeltsin, Boris, 40672, 41151, 41456, 41459, 41507, 41518, 41521, 41548, 41551, 41569, 41589, 41609, 41617, 41657, 41659, 41665, 41693, 41708, 41752, 41785, 41786, 41787, 41836, 41879, 41881, 41887, 41908, 41911, 41922, 41941, 41974
Yemets, Oleksandr, 41508
Yenina, Vera, 41880
Yeo Cheow Tong, 41450
Yeo, George, 41450
Yere, Pierre, 41762, 41901
Yesimov, Akhmetzhan, 41542, 41867
Yeung Sum, 41638
Yevdokimov, Yury, 41457
Yhombi-Opango, Jacques-Joachim, 41624, 41671, 41896
Yi Han Yong, 41495
Yick-ming, Dame Rosanna Wong, 41733
Yildirim, Salih, 41703
Yillah, Momodou, 41529
Yilmaz, Mesut, 41604, 41702, 41746, 41835, 41877, 41887, 41929, 41929, 41934, 41968, 41973, 41978
Yilmaz, Mustafa, 41703
Yingphan, Manasikam, 41916
Yoadimadji, Pascal, 41626
Yoda, Bedouma Alain, 41672
Yoka, Aime-Emmanuel, 41896
Yoo Chong Ha, 41773, 41494, 41537
Yordanov, Yordan, 41703
Young, C. W. Bill, 41727
Young, Coleman, 41952
Yousef, Ramzi Ahmed, 41765, 41903
Yousif, Youcef, 41712
Youssouf, Said Ali, 41948
Youyou, Mohamed Salah, 41712
Ypi, Eduard, 41557
Yu Yongbo, 41813
Yucel, Bahattin, 41702
Yucelen, Rustu Kazim, 41703
Yulo, Jose, 41595
Yumashev, Valentin, 41549, 41658, 41753
Yun Yat, 41683
Yun Yo Chun, 41773
Yushchenko, Viktor, 39285, 41508

Z

Zacklin, Ralph, 41570
Zadornov, Mikhail, 41921
Zafarul, Raja Mohammad, 41740
Zafy, Albert, 41435, 41852
Zahid, Nasir Aslam, 41692
Zaimov, Martin, 41703
Zaitsev, Anatoly, 41549, 41609
Zakpa, Komenan, 41950
Zampaligre, Idrissa, 41672
Zamyatalin, Uladzimir, 41458, 41751
Zanga, Antoine, 41946
Zantovsky, Michael, 41553
Zardari, Asif Ali, 41448, 41692, 41740, 41819
Zardari, Hakim Ali, 41448
Zavadsky, Dmitry, 41751, 41785, 41838, 41976
Zavarei'e, Reza, 41661
Zaveryukha, Aleksandr, 41549
Zayd, Mahmud Abd al-Halim Abu, 41755
Zayzay, Augustine, 41760
Zdrojewski, Marek, 41872
Zedillo Ponce de León, Ernesto, 41441, 41630, 41728, 41809, 41904
Zegrar, Amar, 41712
Zelaya, Luis Carlos, 41442
Zeman, Milos, 41656, 41706, 41931
Zeming, Mao, 41779, 41968
Zenawi, Mels, 41482
Zeng Peiyan, 41860
Zeng Qinghong, 41813
Zeri, Pavli, 41557
Zeroual, Liamine, 41473, 41521, 41568, 41664, 41711, 41756, 41796, 41891, 41983
Zeynalov, Farrukh Mammadnabi, 41711
Zgurovsky, Mykhaylo, 41752
Zhamsuyev, Bair, 41508
Zhang, Siqing, 41540
Zhang Wannian, 41814
Zhang Zhen, 41814
Zhao Jihua, 41542
Zhao Ziyang, 41814, 36722, 41491, 41589
Zharkova, Lyudmila, 41708
Zhelev, Zhelyu, 41453
Zheleznyak, Leonid, 41508
Zhirinovsky, Vladimir, 41457, 41928
Zhivkov, Todor, 41453
Zhou Enlai, 41491, 41492
Zhu Rongji, 41814, 41492
Ziberi, Naser, 41654
Zieleniec, Josef, 41872, 41931
Zielinki, Tadeusz, 41460
Zile, Roberts, 41510, 41785
Zimba, Newstead, 41801, 41948
Zlitini, Abdel Hafidh, 41983
Zobel, Hiller, 41854, 41903
Zog, King, 41597
Zoghbi, Ghneim al-, 41615
Zogu, Leka, 41748
Zongo, Tertius, 41671
Zorin, Valyantsin, 41457
Zouabri, Antar, 41756
Zouari, Abderrahim, 41473
Zoumanigui, Kozo, 41899
Zren, Sheikh Mabrouk, 41664
Zubak, Kresimir, 41555, 41978
Zubakin, Semyon, 41975
Zubets, Mykhaylo, 41610
Zubi, Mahmoud, 41793
Zuccarelli, Emile, 41695
Zuhdi, Karam, 41755
Zuhuroy, Saidamir, 41366, 41500
Zuma, Jacob, 41947
Zuma, Nkosazana, 41575
Zumur, Abbud al-, 41755
Zunda, Eriks, 41510, 41785
Zvolinsky, Vyacheslav, 41550
Zvyagilsky, Yukhim, 41508, 41551
Zwai, Mohammed Belgacem, 41567
Zyuganov, Gennady, 41550, 41609, 41753, 41837, 41880

D
410
K42
INDEX
JAN/DEC
1997
N/C
REFER-
ENCE

REFERENCE

Keesing's Subject Index

Jan.-December. 1997
covering pages
41429-41986
(discard index
No. S1/1997)

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ABECOR Reports—Africa Research Bulletin—Africa Confidential—Africa Economic Digest—Africa Watch—AKEL newsletter (Cyprus)—Amnesty International—Archiv der Gegenwart—Arms Control Reporter—Asian Recorder—Asian Markets Monitor—Baltic Independent—Bangkok Post Weekly Review—BBC World Service News—BBC Summary of World Broadcasts—Beijing Review—British Business (DTI)—Canada Focus—Canadian Newsfacts—Caribbean Handbook—Caribbean Insight—Caribbean Times—Central American Report—CIA Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members—Catholic Institute for International Relations—Courier—Dateline Hong Kong—Defense and Disarmament Alternatives—Development Forum—DFLP Bulletin—EU Bulletin—Economist—Ediciones Cubanas—El País—Europa Year Book—European—Facts on File—Facts and Reports—Far Eastern Economic Review—FEER Asia Yearbook—Financial Times—Finnfacts—FT Caribbean Handbook—The German Tribune—Gleaner weekly edition—Granma weekly review—Guardian—Hansard—The Hindu—Hong Kong Monitor—IAEA Bulletin—IMF Survey—IMF International Financial Statistics—IMF World Economic Outlook—Independent—Independent on Sunday—Index on Censorship—India Today—India Weekly—Indian Ocean Newsletter—Indonesia Development News—International Affairs—International Herald Tribune—Interparliamentary Bulletin—Israeli Mirror—IISS Military Balance—Izvestiya—Jamaica Newsletter—Japan Times weekly overseas edition—Jerusalem Post—Keesing's Historisch Archief—Korea Newsreview—Latin American Regional Reports—Latin America Bureau—Latin America Press—Le Monde—Le Monde Diplomatique—L'Etat du Monde—Look Japan—Malaysian Digest—Middle East Economic Digest—Middle East International—Middle East Times—Minority Rights Group—Moskovskyi Novosti—Namibia News—Neue Zürcher Zeitung—New Zealand News—News from Austria—News from Denmark—News from Iceland—News from Trinidad and Tobago—News from Zambia—Newscan—Norinform—Observer—OECD Economic Survey—OECD Statistics on External Indebtedness—OECD Report on Development Co-operation—OPEC Bulletin—Pacific Islands Yearbook—Pacific Islands Monthly—Pakistan News—Pakistan Profile—Petroleum Economist—Refugees—Review of International Affairs—RFE/RL Research Report—Singapore Bulletin—SIP Newsletter from Sweden—South American Handbook—South Sea Digest—Spur (World Development Movement)—Standard Bank Review—Survey of Current Affairs—Survival International—TAPOL—Thailand News and Information—Times—TNCS Bulletin and Flashes from the Trades Unions—UNDP Human Development Report—Washington Post—Weekly News Update on the Americas—Whitaker's—WHO World Health—World Bank Atlas—World Development Report

A

ABKHAZIA *see* GEORGIA, Abkhazia

ABORTION
Poland: (May 1997) 41656; (Jun 1997) 41707; (Dec 1997) 41976
USA:
Bombing of clincs (Jan 1997) 41437–8
Partial birth abortions illegal (May 1997) 41629–30
Presidential veto of legislation (Oct 1997) 41854

ABU DHABI *see* UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)
Canada: (Nov 1997) 41904
Japan: (Mar 1997) 41539

ADB *see* AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

AFGHANISTAN
Anti-Talibaan alliance:
Deaths of anti-Talibaan leaders in plane crash (Aug 1997) 41774
Dostam
Flight after mutiny against (May 1997) 41635
Leadership of UIFSA (Oct 1997) 41866
Return to Mazar-i-Sharif (Sep 1997) 41818
Dostam/Masud
Advances claimed (Mar 1997) 41542; (Apr 1997) 41588; (May 1997) 41635
Weakening of alliance in face of Talibaan success (Jan 1997) 41452
Factional fighting (Sep 1997) 41819
New anti-Talibaan alliance (Masud-led), Advances (Jun 1997) 41693; (Jul 1997) 41739; (Aug 1997) 41774
Pahlawan's flight to Turkmenistan (Nov 1997) 41913
United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA)

AFGHANISTAN (contd)
Advances (Jun 1997) 41693; (Jul 1997) 41739; (Oct 1997) 41866
Dostam appointed leader (Oct 1997) 41866
Release of prisoners (Nov 1997) 41913; (Dec 1997) 41966
Appointments: Ministerial (Talibaan) (Jan 1997) 41452; (Oct 1997) 41866
Arms trade with: Pakistan (Dec 1997) 41966
Avalanche deaths: (Mar 1997) 41543
Cabinet (Talibaan): (Jan 1997) 41452; (Oct 1997) 41866
Drugs: Talibaan agreement with UN to end opium production (Nov 1997) 41913
Foreign relations:
France (Mar 1997) 41543
Iran (Jun 1997) 41693; (Dec 1997) 41966
Pakistan (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41693; (Dec 1997) 41966
Russia (Jun 1997) 41693; (Dec 1997) 41966
Saudi Arabia (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41693
Tajikistan (Mar 1997) 41542; (May 1997) 41635; (Dec 1997) 41966
Turkmenistan (Oct 1997) 41866; (Dec 1997) 41966
USA (Dec 1997) 41966
Uzbekistan (Dec 1997) 41966
Foreign trade: Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO) summit exclusion (May 1997) 41666
Map: (May 1997) 41635
Name change for country from Islamic State of Afghanistan to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: (Oct 1997) 41866
Peace efforts:
International diplomacy (Jun 1997) 41693
UN (Jan 1997) 41451–2
Religious affairs:
Islamic law (Mar 1997) 41543
Women (Mar 1997) 41543
Security: Explosion in munitions store in Jalalabad (Mar 1997) 41542
Talibaan:

AFGHANISTAN (contd)
Agreement with UN to end opium production (Nov 1997) 41913
Blockade of Hazarajat (Nov 1997) 41913
Ethnic divisions (Jul 1997) 41739
Exchange of prisoners (Nov 1997) 41913; (Dec 1997) 41966
Failure of major offensive (May 1997) 41635
Fighting against opposition forces (Jan 1997) 41451; (Feb 1997) 41500; (Mar 1997) 41542; (Apr 1997) 41588; (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41693; (Jul 1997) 41739; (Aug 1997) 41774; (Sep 1997) 41818–19; (Oct 1997) 41866
Government appointments (Jan 1997) 41452; (Oct 1997) 41866
Iranian embassy in Kabul closed (Jun 1997) 41693
Mazar-i-Sharif
Fall to anti-Talibaan alliance (May 1997) 41635
Surrounded by Talibaan forces (Sep 1997) 41818–19
Presence at Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit (Mar 1997) 41570
Recognition by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41693
Release of French aid workers (Mar 1997) 41543
UN:
Meeting of representatives of neighbouring countries and formation of contact group (Dec 1997) 41966
Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) (Mar 1997) 41542
Peace efforts (Jan 1997) 41451–2

AFRICA
see also AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB); INTER-GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD); ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU);

AFRICA (contd)
REFUGEES; SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)
African Economic Community: (Jun 1997) 41674
Burundi crisis summits: (Apr 1997) 41574; (Sep 1997) 41801
Central African Republic (CAR): Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Bangui Accords (MISAB) (Feb 1997) 41481; (Mar 1997) 41526; (Apr 1997) 41576; (Jun 1997) 41671; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Oct 1997) 41848
East and Southern Africa: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (Jan 1997) 41435; (Apr 1997) 41579
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):
Annual summit (Aug 1997) 41763
Liberia
ECOMOG peacekeeping force
Arrest of former faction fighters (Feb 1997) 41482
Disarmament process (Jan 1997) 41434; (Mar 1997) 41528
National Security Council (Aug 1997) 41760
Reinforcements from UK and USA (Mar 1997) 41528
Supervision of elections (Jul 1997) 41724
Withdrawal plans (Feb 1997) 41482
Election preparations (Feb 1997) 41481–2; (May 1997) 41625
Special summit (May 1997) 41625
Lomé summit (Dec 1997) 41950
Nigerian role (Dec 1997) 41950
Sierra Leone
ECOMOG peacekeeping force (Jun 1997) 41672; 41674; (Jul 1997) 41724; (Aug 1997) 41763; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Dec 1997) 49145
Peace agreement signed (Oct 1997) 41849
Sanctions (Oct 1997) 41850
Franc zone: (Jan 1997) 41435
Francophone states:
Central African Republic peacekeeping force (Feb 1997) 41481; (Mar 1997) 41526; (Apr 1997) 41576; (Oct 1997) 41848–9
French intention to reduce military presence in Africa (Aug 1997) 41763
French policy announcement (Dec 1997) 41971
Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD): *see* INTER-GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)
Lusophone states: (Jan 1997) 41435
Map: (Mar 1997) 41525
Southern African Development Community *see* SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)
Summit of the Eight industrialised countries communiqué: (Jun 1997) 41717
West Africa: *see also* Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB), Annual general meeting: (May 1997) 41628

AID AGENCIES
see also AFRICA; AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB); INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB); INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS/CRESCENT (ICRC); ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD); UNITED NATIONS; UNITED NATIONS agencies
Action against Hunger: (Nov 1997) 41900
Albania international donor conference: (Oct 1997) 41876
Bosnia-Herzegovina donor conference: (Jan 1997) 41456; (Jun 1997) 41704–5; (Jul 1997) 41749
Médecins sans Frontières:
Burundi (Apr 1997) 41574
Rwanda (Jan 1997) 41431
Somalia (Nov 1997) 41900
Mongolia Assistance Group (MAG): (Oct 1997) 41864

AID AGENCIES (contd)
North-South Italian Co-operation: (Nov 1997) 41900
Oxfam: Uganda debt relief programme criticised (Apr 1997) 41578
Palestinian international donors' meeting: (Dec 1997) 41982
Paris Club:
Bangladesh (Nov 1997) 41915
Russia membership (Mar 1997) 41569; (Sep 1997) 41836; (Dec 1997) 41981
Save the Children Fund: Tibet (Dec 1997) 41961
Somalia Aid Co-ordination Body (SACB): (Mar 1997) 41537
Tajikistan donor conference: (Nov 1997) 41913
Vietnam international donor meeting: (Dec 1997) 41961

AIDS *see* ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

ALBANIA
Appointments:
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41557; (Jul 1997) 41747–8
Officials and civil servants (Aug 1997) 41789
PDS chair (Jul 1997) 41747
PDS officials (Oct 1997) 41876
Security chief (May 1997) 41653–4; (Aug 1997) 41789
Armed forces:
Chief of Staff replaced (Mar 1997) 41556–7
Suspension of army offensive (Mar 1997) 41557
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41557; (Jul 1997) 41747–8
Constitutional Court: (Aug 1997) 41789; (Nov 1997) 41933; (Dec 1997) 41979
Corruption:
Government pledge to eliminate (Jul 1997) 41748
Pyramid finance schemes (Jan 1997) 41454; (Feb 1997) 41504–5; (May 1997) 41654; (Nov 1997) 41933
Democratic Party of Albania (PDS):
Chairman (Jul 1997) 41747
Criticism of dismissals of local authority officials (Nov 1997) 41933
Discontent within party (Feb 1997) 41506
Dismissals (Aug 1997) 41789
Dissidents removed (Apr 1997) 41597
Elections (Jun 1997) 41703; (Jul 1997) 41747
Government crisis (Mar 1997) 41556–7
Media time (Sep 1997) 41835
National conference (Oct 1997) 41876
Negotiations over June elections (May 1997) 41653
Pyramid finance schemes collapse (Jan 1997) 41454; (Feb 1997) 41505
Shooting of MP by PSS MP (Sep 1997) 41834
Support for Berisha (Apr 1997) 41597
Dismissals:
Central bank governor (Apr 1997) 41597
Local authority officials (Nov 1997) 41933
Military (Mar 1997) 41556–7
Police chief (Apr 1997) 41597
Drugs: (Jun 1997) 41703
Economy:
Aid package (Oct 1997) 41876
Budget (Apr 1997) 41597; (May 1997) 41654
Central bank (Jan 1997) 41454; (Feb 1997) 41505; (Apr 1997) 41597; (Aug 1997) 41789
Currency collapse (Jan 1997) 41454
IMF (Jan 1997) 41454; (Apr 1997) 41597; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Oct 1997) 41876; (Nov 1997) 41933
Impact of crisis (Apr 1997) 41597
Oil agreement (Dec 1997) 41979
Pyramid finance schemes collapse (Jan 1997) 41454; (Feb 1997) 41504–5; (May 1997) 41654; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Oct 1997) 41876; (Nov 1997) 41933
Trade unions (Oct 1997) 41876
Elections:
Negotiations among parties (Apr 1997) 41597; (May 1997) 41653
Results (Jun 1997) 41703–4; (Jul 1997) 41747
Foreign relations:

ALBANIA (contd)
European Union (EU) (Mar 1997) 41558
France (Mar 1997) 41558
Francophonie group of countries (Nov 1997) 41940
Greece (Mar 1997) 41556; 41558; (Aug 1997) 41789; (Oct 1997) 41876
Italy (Mar 1997) 41557; 41558; (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (May 1997) 41654; (Aug 1997) 41789–90; (Dec 1997) 41979
Macedonia (Mar 1997) 41556; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Oct 1997) 41877
Netherlands (Mar 1997) 41558
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Mar 1997) 41558; (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (May 1997) 41653
Romania (Mar 1997) 41558
Spain (Mar 1997) 41558
Turkey (Mar 1997) 41558
USA (May 1997) 41653
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (Nov 1997) 41934
Forum for Democracy (opposition grouping): (Feb 1997) 41505–6
International conference on Albania: (Aug 1997) 41789
Map: (Feb 1997) 41505
Media: (Sep 1997) 41835; (Nov 1997) 41934
Monarchy:
Referendum on (Jul 1997) 41748; (Aug 1997) 41789
Return of exiled pretender (Apr 1997) 41597
Movement for Democracy (MDP): (Apr 1997) 41597
Obituary of former Prime Minister Carcani: (Oct 1997) 41876
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): (Mar 1997) 41557; (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (May 1997) 41653; (Jun 1997) 41703–4; (Jul 1997) 41747
Political parties: (Mar 1997) 41557; (May 1997) 41653; (Jul 1997) 41747; (Sep 1997) 41834–5
President:
Berisha
Assassination attempt (Jun 1997) 41703
Meksi government's resignation ordered (Mar 1997) 41556
Negotiations with opposition leaders (Mar 1997) 41557
Pyramid finance schemes collapse (Feb 1997) 41505
Re-election by People's Assembly (Mar 1997) 41556–7
Resignation (Jun 1997) 41704; (Jul 1997) 41747
Mejdani
Divisions with legislature over inquiries into unrest (Nov 1997) 41933–4
Elected by People's Assembly (Jul 1997) 41747
Prime Minister:
Fino
Appeal for outside military assistance (Mar 1997) 41557–8
Appointment (Mar 1997) 41557
Visits to
southern Albania (Apr 1997) 41596
USA (May 1997) 41653
Meksi, Resignation (Mar 1997) 41556
Nano
Government programme (Jul 1997) 41747–8
International conference on Albania (Aug 1997) 41789
Referendum on the monarchy: (Jul 1997) 41748; (Aug 1997) 41789
Refugees to Italy: (Mar 1997) 41558; (May 1997) 41654
Repatriation of refugees from Italy: (Dec 1997) 41979
Republican Party:
Resignation of Godo (Nov 1997) 41934
Withdrawal from PDS led coalition (Feb 1997) 41506
Resignations:
Berisha (Jul 1997) 41747
PDS chair (Jul 1997) 41747

ALBANIA (contd)
Republican Party leader (Nov 1997) 41934
Security:
Agreement with Macedonia (Oct 1997) 41877
Ammunition depot explosion (Apr 1997) 41597
Demonstrations and violence (Jan 1997) 41454; (Feb 1997) 41504–5; (Mar 1997) 41556; (Jun 1997) 41703; (Jul 1997) 41748; (Sep 1997) 41834
Government action to restore order (Aug 1997) 41789
Mass arrests (Feb 1997) 41505
SHIK (secret police)
Chief (May 1997) 41653–4; (Aug 1997) 41789
Reported disbandment (Apr 1997) 41596
Shooting of politician (Sep 1997) 41834
Southern rebellion
Government efforts to retake control (Aug 1997) 41789
Investigation into causes of (Oct 1997) 41876; (Nov 1997) 41933–4
Italian forces deployed (Apr 1997) 41596–7
Peace talks (Mar 1997) 41557
Police (Feb 1997) 41505
Spread of rebellion (Mar 1997) 41556; (Apr 1997) 41596–7
State of emergency (Mar 1997) 41556
Strike of newspapers (Nov 1997) 41934
Tirana fighting (Mar 1997) 41557
Socialist Party of Albania (PSS):
Agreement to re-enter legislature (Apr 1997) 41597
Dismissal of local authority officials (Nov 1997) 41933
Elections (Jun 1997) 41703–4; (Jul 1997) 41747
Media time (Sep 1997) 41835
Nano pardoned (Mar 1997) 41557
Negotiations over June elections (May 1997) 41653
Shooting of PDS MP (Sep 1997) 41834
Talks with Berisha (Mar 1997) 41557
Supreme Court: Convictions against communist officials overturned (Sep 1997) 41835; (Oct 1997) 41876
Trials: Charges against former communist leaders dropped (Oct 1997) 41876
UN: Multinational peacekeeping force (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (Jun 1997) 41703; (Jul 1997) 41747; (Aug 1997) 41789

ALGERIA
Appointments:
Military (Oct 1997) 41892
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41712
Armed Islamic Group (GIA):
Belgian seizure of arms supplies (Mar 1997) 41560
Clashes with security forces (Jan 1997) 41473
Killing of Zouabri (GIA leader) reported (Jul 1997) 41756
Massacres (Oct 1997) 41892
Murders of families of dissident groups within GIA (Feb 1997) 41520
Rewards placed on alleged commanders (May 1997) 41664
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41712
Economy:
Budget (Dec 1997) 41983
Stock exchange opened (Dec 1997) 41983
Trade unions (Jan 1997) 41473
Elections:
Legislative
Timetable (Feb 1997) 41521; (Mar 1997) 41568
Campaign (May 1997) 41664
Results (Jun 1997) 41711–12
Local (Oct 1997) 41891–2
National Council (upper house) (Dec 1997) 41983
Foreign relations:
France, Algerian nationals sentenced (Feb 1997) 41514
Spain (Apr 1997) 41616
Hamas:
Election plans (Apr 1997) 41616

ALGERIA (contd)
Renamed Movement of Society for Peace (MSP) (May 1997) 41664
Human rights: (Aug 1997) 41796; (Nov 1997) 41935
Islamic Salvation Front (FIS):
Election boycott called for (Apr 1997) 41616; (May 1997) 41664
Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) (Feb 1997) 41520; (Apr 1997) 41616; (May 1997) 41664; (Oct 1997) 41892
Leaders released (Jul 1997) 41756
Madani under house arrest (Sep 1997) 41843
Refusal to participate in elections (Feb 1997) 41521; (Mar 1997) 41568
Truce call by AIS (Sep 1997) 41843
Map: (Jun 1997) 41712
Movement of Society for Peace (MSP): Election campaign (May 1997) 41664; (Jun 1997) 41711–12
National Democratic Rally (RND): (Feb 1997) 41521; (May 1997) 41664; (Jun 1997) 41711–12; (Oct 1997) 41891–2
National Liberation Front (FLN):
Election campaign (May 1997) 41664; (Jun 1997) 41711–12
National Council elections (Dec 1997) 41983
Peace efforts: Spanish non-governmental conference in Madrid (Apr 1997) 41616
Political parties: (May 1997) 41664; (Jun 1997) 41712; (Dec 1997) 41983
Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD): (May 1997) 41664
Security:
see also Armed Islamic Group (GIA)
Anti-Islamist militias (government-approved) (Jan 1997) 41473
Army acquiescence in massacres alleged (Sep 1997) 41843
Election violence (May 1997) 41664; (Oct 1997) 41891–2
House arrest for Madani (FIS leader) (Sep 1997) 41843
Islamic Armed Djihad Front (Mar 1997) 41568
Jihad Islamic Front (Feb 1997) 41521
Killings
Car bombings (Jan 1997) 41473
Civilians (Apr 1997) 41616
GIA leader (Jul 1997) 41756
Islamists by security forces (Mar 1997) 41568; (Apr 1997) 41616; (May 1997) 41664
Massacres (Aug 1997) 41796; (Sep 1997) 41843; (Oct 1997) 41892; (Dec 1997) 41983
Train bomb (Apr 1997) 41616
Union leader (Jan 1997) 41473; (Feb 1997) 41521
Pro-democracy protests (Oct 1997) 41891–2
Ramadan violence (Jan 1997) 41473; (Feb 1997) 41520–1
Release of FIS leaders (Jul 1997) 41756
Strikes (Jan 1997) 41473
Socialist Forces Front (FFS):
Ait Ahmed's criticism of anti-Islamist militias (Jan 1997) 41473
Elections (Apr 1997) 41616; (May 1997) 41664; (Jun 1997) 41711–12; (Oct 1997) 41891–2
National Council elections (Dec 1997) 41983
Trials:
GIA members (Dec 1997) 41983
Hachani (FIS leader) (Jul 1997) 41756

AMERICAS
see also CARIBBEAN; CENTRAL AMERICA; LATIN AMERICA; NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT; ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES
Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA):
Negotiations to establish (May 1997) 41634; (Aug 1997) 41768; (Oct 1997) 41857
Ibero-American summit: (Nov 1997) 41907
Managua Declaration: (Sep 1997) 41813
Rio Group: Summit (Aug 1997) 41768

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
Algeria: (Nov 1997) 41935
China: (Aug 1997) 41771

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (contd)
Equatorial Guinea: (Jul 1997) 41723
Germany: (Jul 1997) 41743
Kenya: (Jan 1997) 41432
Russia: (Apr 1997) 41610
Rwanda:
Genocide trials (Jan 1997) 41431
Massacres by government soldiers (Aug 1997) 41761
Saudi Arabia: (Nov 1997) 41936
Singapore: (Nov 1997) 41918
UK: (Feb 1997) 41516

ANDORRA
Elections: (Feb 1997) 41513
Liberal Union (UL): Election victory (Feb 1997) 41513

ANGOLA
Appointments: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41525–6
Armed forces: *see* Peace process
Cabinet: (Apr 1997) 41525–6
Foreign relations:
Congo (Oct 1997) 41848
South Africa (Apr 1997) 41576
Vatican (Jul 1997) 41722–3
Zaïre (May 1997) 41621; (Jun 1997) 41670–1
Zambia (Apr 1997) 41576
Map: (Apr 1997) 41576
National Reconciliation Government:
Inauguration (Apr 1997) 41525–6
National Union for the Total Independence of Angola *see* UNITA *subhdg*
Obituary of minister: (Sep 1997) 41803
Peace process:
Delays (Feb 1997) 41480; (Mar 1997) 41528
Threatened (Jun 1997) 41670–1
Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola-Workers' Party (MPLA-PT):
Cabinet appointments (Apr 1997) 41525–6
Delaying tactics of UNITA (Mar 1997) 41528
Resolution condemning UNITA's behaviour (Jul 1997) 41722
President: Dos Santos' relationship with UNITA leader *see* UNITA, Savimbi
Security:
see also UNITA *subhdg below*
Conflict with pro-Mobutu Zaïrean armed militias (Jun 1997) 41670
UN:
Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III)
Call on government to suspend offensive (Jun 1997) 41671
Extension of mandate (Feb 1997) 41480; (Apr 1997) 41576
Inauguration of unity government urged (Mar 1997) 41528
Observer Mission in Angola (UNOMA) (Jul 1997) 41722
Sanctions against UNITA (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41850; (Nov 1997) 41899
UNITA:
Cabinet appointments (Apr 1997) 41525–6
Ceding of territory to comply with Lusaka Protocol (Dec 1997) 41947
Demobilisation promise (Sep 1997) 41803
Disappearance of supporters in Malanje province (Nov 1997) 41899
Failure to fulfil Lusaka Protocol commitments (Aug 1997) 41759; (Oct 1997) 41850
Failure to participate in unity government (Feb 1997) 41480; (Mar 1997) 41528; (Aug 1997) 41759
Government offensive against (Jun 1997) 41670–1; (Jul 1997) 41722; (Aug 1997) 41759
Military operations stepped up (Jul 1997) 41722
Savimbi
Criticism of UN sanctions threat (Sep 1997) 41803
Doubts about future status (Feb 1997) 41480
Refusal to attend inauguration of National Reconciliation Government (Apr 1997) 41526
Special status (Apr 1997) 41576
Talks offer to dos Santos (Jun 1997) 41671

ANGOLA (contd)
Support for Kabila insurgents in Zaïre (May 1997) 41621
UN sanctions threat (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41850; (Nov 1997) 41899

ANGUILLA, UK initiative to counter money laundering: (Jan 1997) 41443

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41957
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41957
Corruption: (Dec 1997) 41957
Economy: Russian offshore banks closed down (Feb 1997) 41491
Foreign relations: Russia (Feb 1997) 41491
Security: Attack on Bird jr (brother of Prime Minister) (Dec 1997) 41957

APEC *see* ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (APEC)

ARAB LEAGUE
Boycott of Middle East and North Africa economic conference: (Nov 1997) 41939
Comoros: (Sep 1997) 41805
Foreign ministers' meetings (Mar 1997) 41565–6; (Sep 1997) 41844
Libya:
Easing of UN sanctions urged (Sep 1997) 41844
Expelled Palestinians encouraged to return (Jan 1997) 41474

ARAB STATES
see also ARAB LEAGUE; GULF CO-OPERATION COUNCIL (GCC); MIDDLE EAST
Damascus Declaration states: Foreign ministers' meeting (Jun 1997) 41716

ARGENTINA
Action for the Republic party: (Apr 1997) 41584
Action for the Republic-New Leadership (AR-ND): Launch of party (Jul 1997) 41730
Alliance (opposition grouping): (Oct 1997) 41857
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41955
Constitution: Council of Magistrates created (Dec 1997) 41955
Corruption: Justice Minister Jassán resignation (Jun 1997) 41680
Economy:
Banking (Apr 1997) 41584
Labour reforms (May 1997) 41632–3
Peso parity with dollar commitment (Jan 1997) 41439
Privatisation (Apr 1997) 41584; (May 1997) 41632
Trade unions (May 1997) 41632–3; (Aug 1997) 41768
World Bank (May 1997) 41632
Elections: Congressional (Oct 1997) 41857–8
Foreign relations:
Brazil (Aug 1997) 41768; (Oct 1997) 41858
Chile (Aug 1997) 41768
China (Oct 1997) 41858
NATO (Aug 1997) 41768; (Oct 1997) 41858
Spain (Mar 1997) 41532; (Oct 1997) 41858
UK
see also FALKLAND (MALVINAS) ISLANDS
Anti-British bomb incident (Nov 1997) 41906
Invitation to Menem to visit UK (Nov 1997) 41906
South Atlantic fisheries negotiations (Jan 1997) 41440
Visit to Falklands by relatives of Argentinian soldiers killed in 1982 war (Jan 1997) 41440
USA (Oct 1997) 41858
Foreign trade: USA, Sanctions (Apr 1997) 41584
Front for a Country in Solidarity (Frepaso):
Congressional elections (Oct 1997) 41857–8
Pact with Radical Civic Union (UCR) *see* Radical Civic Union (UCR)
Human rights:

ARGENTINA (contd)
Galtieri arrest warrant issued in Spain (Mar 1997) 41532
Police brutality (Apr 1997) 41584
Spanish arrest warrants for former naval officers involved in "disappeared" (Oct 1997) 41858
Justicialist Party (PJ-Peronists): Congressional elections (Oct 1997) 41857–8
Media: Murder of journalist (Jan 1997) 41440; (Apr 1997) 41584
President:
Falklands (Malvinas) sovereignty issue statement (Jan 1997) 41440
Invitation to Menem to visit UK (Nov 1997) 41906
Meeting with UK Prime Minister (Jun 1997) 41680
Radical Civic Union (UCR):
Congressional elections (Oct 1997) 41857–8
Electoral pact with Front for a Country in Solidarity (Frepaso) (Aug 1997) 41767
Resignations: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41680; (Dec 1997) 41955
Security:
Investigation of 1994 bombing of AMIA Jewish centre (Nov 1997) 41906
Killings
Journalist (Jan 1997) 41440; (Apr 1997) 41584
Teacher (Apr 1997) 41584
Police brutality (Apr 1997) 41584
Strikes and demonstrations (Apr 1997) 41584; (May 1997) 41632–3; (Aug 1997) 41768
Trials: Guerrillas sentenced (Jul 1997) 41730
UN: Security Council seat question (Aug 1997) 41768
War crimes: Nazi gold contribution offer (Dec 1997) 41984

ARMENIA
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments:
Ministerial (May 1997) 41661; (Jun 1997) 41711
Prime Minister (Mar 1997) 41551
Prime Ministerial adviser (Jan 1997) 41469
Azatutyun party: (Jun 1997) 41711
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41711
Defence: Armed forces, Conscription proposals (Jun 1997) 41711
Economy:
Budget (Feb 1997) 41510; (Dec 1997) 41979
Privatisation (Nov 1997) 41922
World Bank (Aug 1997) 41788
Energy: Gas agreement with Russia (Aug 1997) 41788; (Oct 1997) 41877
Foreign relations:
Azerbaijan
Fighting (Apr 1997) 41612; (May 1997) 41660
Nagorno Karabakh (Mar 1997) 41551; (Apr 1997) 41612; (May 1997) 41660; (Jun 1997) 41710; (Sep 1997) 41835–6; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Georgia (May 1997) 41661
Russia (Aug 1997) 41787–8
Turkey (Jun 1997) 41703
Foreign trade: Russia (Aug 1997) 41787–8; (Oct 1997) 41877
Pan-Armenian National Movement (HHSh): (Jun 1997) 41711; (Jul 1997) 41754
President:
Resignation of adviser (Sep 1997) 41835
Visit to Russia (Aug 1997) 41787–8
Prime Minister:
Adviser appointed (Jan 1997) 41469
Appointment of Kocharyan (Mar 1997) 41551
Resignation of Sarkissian (Mar 1997) 41551
Resignations:
Presidential adviser (Sep 1997) 41835
Prime Minister Sarkissian (Mar 1997) 41551
Speaker (Jun 1997) 41711
Supreme Court: Protestors released (Jun 1997) 41711
Union of Socialist Forces (SUM): (Nov 1997) 41922

ARMS TRADE
China to:
Kuwait (Nov 1997) 41936
Thailand (Apr 1997) 41595
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (Nov 1997) 41933
France to:
Korea, South (Oct 1997) 41863
United Arab Emirates (Dec 1997) 41980
Iran-Russia-China missile co-operation allegations: (Sep 1997) 41842
Israel to:
Lebanon (Apr 1997) 41615
Poland (Oct 1997) 41872
Korea, North to:
Iran (Jun 1997) 41689
Syria (Jun 1997) 41689
Pakistan to: Afghanistan (Dec 1997) 41966
Russia to:
Cyprus (Jan 1997) 41461; (Sep 1997) 41835
Indonesia (Aug 1997) 41778
South Africa to: Syria question (Jan 1997) 41430
Switzerland arms exports referendum: (Jun 1997) 41701
USA to:
Indonesia, Cancelled (Jun 1997) 41685
Romania, Suspended (Aug 1997) 41791

ARUBA
Elections: (Dec 1997) 41957
Political parties: (Dec 1997) 41957

ASEAN *see* ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)

ASIA *see* ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM); ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB); ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN);

ASIA *see* ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION ORGANISATION (ECO); SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (SAARC)

ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM)
Effect on ASEAN: (Feb 1997) 41502
Finance ministers' meeting: (Sep 1997) 41824

ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (APEC)
Membership: (Nov 1997) 41919
Russia entry question: (Nov 1997) 41909
Vancouver summit: (Nov 1997) 41919

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)
Annual meeting: (May 1997) 41646
Korea, North: (Sep 1997) 41817
Korea, South: (Dec 1997) 41957
Kyrgyzstan: (Nov 1997) 41912
Regional economic crisis: (Oct 1997) 41861
Replenishment of Asian Development Fund (ADF) agreed: (Jan 1997) 41452
Thailand: (Aug 1997) 41777
Vanuatu: (Sep 1997) 41825; (Oct 1997) 41871
Vietnam loans: (Mar 1997) 41546

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)
see also ASIA-EUROPE MEETING
Appointments: Secretary-General (Jul 1997) 41736
ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): Foreign ministers' meeting (Jul 1997) 41736
ASEAN-European Union (EU) Joint Co-operation Conference: Cancelled (Nov 1997) 41919
Cambodia: Hun Sen coup condemned (Jul 1997) 41734; (Aug 1997) 41776
Economic ministers' meeting: (Oct 1997) 41870
Foreign ministers' meeting: (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41735–6
Foreign relations:
European Union (EU) (Feb 1997) 41501; 41502–3; (Nov 1997) 41919
USA (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) (contd)
Japan: Prime Minister's tour of ASEAN countries (Jan 1997) 41445
Membership questions:
Burma (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736; (Aug 1997) 41776; (Sep 1997) 41823
Cambodia (May 1997) 41642; (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736
Laos (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736
Regional financial crisis: (Oct 1997) 41870
Summit: (Dec 1997) 41963
Vietnam/China dispute over oil and gas reserves: (Mar 1997) 41545–6

ASYLUM *see* IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION

AUSTRALIA
Aborigines:
Compensation announcement (Dec 1997) 41966
Land rights proposals rejected by Senate (Dec 1997) 41966
Land-title law clarification (Apr 1997) 41596
Report on Aboriginal adoption policy (May 1997) 41644
Traditional punishment legally recognised (Dec 1997) 41966–7
Appointments: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41870–1
Australian Democrats: (Oct 1997) 41871
Australian Labor Party (ALP):
Defection to ALP of Democrat leader (Oct 1997) 41871
Politician's attempted suicide (Oct 1997) 41871
Cabinet: (Oct 1997) 41870–1
Constitution:
Convention on constitutional change (Feb 1997) 41501–2; (Dec 1997) 41967
Euthanasia issue (Mar 1997) 41548
Corruption: Government ministers' travel allowance scandal (Sep 1997) 41824; (Oct 1997) 41871
Economy:
Budget (May 1997) 41644
Industrial policy (Dec 1997) 41967
Unemployment (May 1997) 41644; (Oct 1997) 41871
Elections: Constitutional convention (Dec 1997) 41967
Environment:
Bush fires (Dec 1997) 41967
Greenhouse emissions targets refused (Sep 1997) 41825
Ethical issues: Medical experiments on children controversy (Jun 1997) 41685–6
Euthanasia: (Jan 1997) 41452; (Mar 1997) 41548
Foreign relations:
Fiji (Sep 1997) 41825
Indonesia, Maritime treaty (Mar 1997) 41547
Japan (Apr 1997) 41591
Malaysia (Apr 1997) 41595; (May 1997) 41643
Papua New Guinea (Feb 1997) 41502
Saudi Arabia (Sep 1997) 41841–2; (Oct 1997) 41889
Foreign trade: Taiwan (Feb 1997) 41494
Human rights: *see* Aborigines
Immigration: Restrictions (May 1997) 41644
Nuclear issues: Nuclear reactor plans (Sep 1997) 41825
Obituary of former Deputy Prime Minister Barnard: (Sep 1997) 41824–5
Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party: (Mar 1997) 41548; (Apr 1997) 41596; (May 1997) 41644; (Dec 1997) 41967
Queensland: Chinese Community Voice, Challenge to Hanson's One Nation party (Apr 1997) 41596
Racial issues: *see* Aborigines; Immigration; Pauline Hanson's One Nation party
Resignations: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41824
Security: Gun laws (Jan 1997) 41452
Senate: Rejection of Aboriginal land rights bill (Dec 1997) 41966

AUSTRIA
Appointments:
Chancellor (Jan 1997) 41465
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41465
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41465
Chancellor:
Appointment of Klima (Jan 1997) 41465
Resignation of Vranitzky (Jan 1997) 41464–5
Defence: Military reforms (Apr 1997) 41598
Economy: Privatisation of Creditanstalt (Jan 1997) 41465
Emigration and Immigration: Immigration policies (Feb 1997) 41512; (Jul 1997) 41746
European Union (EU):
Border controls anxieties (Jul 1997) 41746
Tobacco advertising ban (Dec 1997) 41968
Foreign Minister's derogatory comments about foreign leaders: (Jul 1997) 41754
Foreign relations:
France (Jul 1997) 41754
Germany (Jul 1997) 41754
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Taiwan (Oct 1997) 41861
USA (Jul 1997) 41754
Freedom Party (FPÖ): Immigration policies (Feb 1997) 41512
People's Party (ÖVP): Opposition to privatisation of Creditanstalt (Jan 1997) 41465
President: Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Resignations: Chancellor (Jan 1997) 41464–5
Security:
Arrest of racist bomber suspect (Oct 1997) 41882
Covert surveillance operation reports (Apr 1997) 41598
Social Democratic Party (SPÖ):
Immigration policy (Feb 1997) 41512
Klima elected as leader (Apr 1997) 41598
Resignation of Vranitzky as Chancellor (Jan 1997) 41464–5

AVIATION
Air crashes:
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sep 1997) 41834
Cambodia (Sep 1997) 41822
Cuba (Jul 1997) 41732
Greece (Dec 1997) 41972
Guam (Aug 1997) 41779–80
India (Nov 1997) 41914
Indonesia (Sep 1997) 41824; (Dec 1997) 41962
Iran (Mar 1997) 41567
Israel (Feb 1997) 41517
Russia (Mar 1997) 41550; (Dec 1997) 41975
Senegal (Feb 1997) 41483
United Arab Emirates (Dec 1997) 41980
USA (Jan 1997) 41438
European Union (EU): Accord with Boeing (Jul 1997) 41746
France: Air France (Sep 1997) 41828
Hijackings: Taiwanese aircraft to China (Mar 1997) 41541
Korea, North: Discussions with South Korea over North Korean air space (Mar 1997) 41538; (Oct 1997) 41863
Lockerbie bombing:
ICJ hearing (Oct 1997) 41891
Libyan government offer to families (Jun 1997) 41712–13
Mandela's comments on visit to Libya (Oct 1997) 41891
UN trial report (Dec 1997) 41983
Russia: Aeroflot (Jun 1997) 41708
USA: TWA air crash investigations (Mar 1997) 41531; (Sep 1997) 41808; (Nov 1997) 41903

AZERBAIJAN
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41711; (Jul 1997) 41754
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41711
Democratic Azerbaijan bloc: (Oct 1997) 41878
Democratic Congress: (May 1997) 41660
Dismissals: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41754
Economy:

AZERBAIJAN (contd)
Budget (Jan 1997) 41460; (Dec 1997) 41973
Energy supplies (May 1997) 41659; (Oct 1997) 41878
IMF (Dec 1997) 41973
Elichibey:
Elected chair of opposition coalition (May 1997) 41660
Return from internal exile (Nov 1997) 41922
Foreign relations:
Armenia
see also Nagorno Karabakh
Fighting (Apr 1997) 41612; (May 1997) 41660
Iran, Espionage (Apr 1997) 41612
Turkey (May 1997) 41660
Turkmenistan, Oil dispute (Jul 1997) 41739; (Aug 1997) 41788; (Oct 1997) 41866
USA (Aug 1997) 41788; (Sep 1997) 41836
Foreign trade: Russia (May 1997) 41659; (Aug 1997) 41788; (Sep 1997) 41837; (Oct 1997) 41878
Islamic Party: (Apr 1997) 41612
Nagorno Karabakh:
Armenia-Azerbaijan relations (Mar 1997) 41551; (Apr 1997) 41612; (May 1997) 41660; (Jun 1997) 41710; (Sep 1997) 41835–6; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Autonomy proposals (Oct 1997) 41878
Kocharyan (president of self-proclaimed republic) appointed Prime Minister of Armenia (Mar 1997) 41551
Peace plan (Jun 1997) 41710; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Petrossian meeting with OSCE (Nov 1997) 41922
Presidential elections
Announced (Jun 1997) 41710–11
Results (Sep 1997) 41835–6
Petroleum:
Caspian Sea oil begins to flow (Nov 1997) 41922
Dispute with Turkmenistan (Jul 1997) 41739; (Aug 1997) 41788
Oil deal with USA (Aug 1997) 41788
Russian oil agreement difficulties (Aug 1997) 41788; (Sep 1997) 41837
President:
Assassination plot thwarted (Feb 1997) 41510
Visits to
Turkey (May 1997) 41660
USA (Aug 1997) 41788
Security:
Coup attempt arrests (Feb 1997) 41510
Security Council (Apr 1997) 41612
Statement on alleged 1996 coup plot (Jan 1997) 41460
Socialist Party of Azerbaijan (SPA): (Nov 1997) 41922
Supreme Court:
Islamic Party members imprisoned for spying for Iran (Apr 1997) 41612
Sentencing of 1995 attempted coup plotters (Jan 1997) 41460
Trials:
1995 coup attempt participants (Dec 1997) 41973
Organisers of illegal paramilitaries (1993–94) on behalf of Prime Minister Guseinov (Dec 1997) 41973

B

BAHAMAS
Appointments:
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41536
Speaker (Apr 1997) 41586
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41536
Elections:
Timetable (Feb 1997) 41490
Results (Mar 1997) 41535
Foreign relations: Taiwan (May 1997) 41639
Free National Movement (FNM): (Mar 1997) 41535
Map: (Mar 1997) 41536
Political parties: (Mar 1997) 41535–6; (Apr 1997) 41586

BAHAMAS (contd)
Security:
Bomb attack in Nassau aimed at Cuban travel industry (Aug 1997) 41769
Murder of minister (Feb 1997) 41490

BAHRAIN
Defence: National Guard (Jan 1997) 41474
Foreign relations:
Iran (Mar 1997) 41569
Iraq (Nov 1997) 41938
Qatar (Mar 1997) 41568–9
Security:
Anti-government plotters imprisoned (Mar 1997) 41569
Islamists (Mar 1997) 41569
Trials: Exiled opposition leaders tried in absentia for attempted coup (Nov 1997) 41940

BALKAN STATES *see* EUROPE, South-eastern European countries

BALTIC STATES
see also ESTONIA; LATVIA; LITHUANIA
Baltic Assembly: 10th session (Apr 1997) 41608
Council of Ministers meetings: (Feb 1997) 41517
Foreign relations: Russia (Nov 1997) 41924
NATO membership ambitions: (Apr 1997) 41608; (Sep 1997) 41839
Presidential summit: (Nov 1997) 41924
Presidents' meeting with Polish and Ukrainian counterparts: (May 1997) 41657
Prime Ministers' meeting: (Nov 1997) 41924

BANGLADESH
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41448–9
Awami League:
Clashes with BNP (Sep 1997) 41821
Repeal of indemnity ordinance protecting accused of 1975 coup (Jan 1997) 41449
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP):
Arrest of leaders (Oct 1997) 41871
Boycott of legislature (Nov 1997) 41915
Clashes with Awami League (Sep 1997) 41821
Strikes called (Jul 1997) 41739; (Dec 1997) 41964
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41448–9
Corruption: *see* Ershad
Cyclones: (May 1997) 41637; (Sep 1997) 41821
Death penalty: (Sep 1997) 41821
Dhaka: Demolition of slums (Feb 1997) 41500
Dismissals: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41500
Earthquake: (Nov 1997) 41915
Economy:
Donor anxieties (Nov 1997) 41915
Working week changes (Jun 1997) 41692
Environment: Water-sharing agreement with India (Jul 1997) 41739
Ershad: Release on bail (Jan 1997) 41449
Foreign relations: India (Jul 1997) 41739
Jatiya Dal (JD):
Deal with Awami League over Ershad alleged (Jan 1997) 41449
Split (Jul 1997) 41739
Security:
Arrest of BNP leaders (Oct 1997) 41871
Demonstrations (Jun 1997) 41692; (Sep 1997) 41821; (Oct 1997) 41871
General strikes (Jul 1997) 41739; (Sep 1997) 41821; (Nov 1997) 41915; (Dec 1997) 41964
Peace treaty with Chittagong separatists (Dec 1997) 41964
Trials:
1975 coup leaders (Jan 1997) 41449; (Mar 1997) 41548
Police (Sep 1997) 41821

BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS (BIS), Nazi gold statement: (May 1997) 41666

BELARUS
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments:
Banking (Jan 1997) 41459

BELARUS (contd)
Judiciary (Jan 1997) 41458–9
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41458; (Jul 1997) 41751; (Sep 1997) 41838; (Nov 1997) 41923
Opposition shadow cabinet (Jan 1997) 41459
Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BCDTU): (Feb 1997) 41509
Belarusian Popular Front (BNF): (Feb 1997) 41509; (May 1997) 41659; (Nov 1997) 41923
Constitution: (Jan 1997) 41458; (Jul 1997) 41751; (Nov 1997) 41923
Corruption:
Lyavonaw (Agricultural Minister) and farm executive (Nov 1997) 41923
Vinnikava (National Bank chairwoman) (Jan 1997) 41459; (Nov 1997) 41923
Council of Europe: Suspension of Belarus' observer status (Jan 1997) 41459
Council of Ministers: (Jan 1997) 41458
Council of the Republic (upper house of legislature):
Election of chairman (Jan 1997) 41458
Rejection of curbs to media freedom (Oct 1997) 41879
Defence: Russia co-operation treaty (Dec 1997) 41976
Disasters: Storm damage (Jun 1997) 41710
Dismissals: Ministerial (May 1997) 41659
Economy:
Budget (Dec 1997) 41976
National Bank (Jan 1997) 41459
Soros Foundation (Mar 1997) 41550; (May 1997) 41659; (Sep 1997) 41838
Foreign relations:
European Union (EU) (Jan 1997) 41459
Russia
Arrest and trial of Russian journalists (Jul 1997) 41751; (Aug 1997) 41785; (Sep 1997) 41838; (Dec 1997) 41976
Cancellation of Presidential visit to Russia (Oct 1997) 41879
Defence treaty (Dec 1997) 41976
Integration moves (Jan 1997) 41459; (Mar 1997) 41550–1
Release of detained journalist (Oct 1997) 41879
Restrictions on Russian journalists (Mar 1997) 41550
Union budget (Dec 1997) 41976
Union treaty signed (Apr 1997) 41610; (May 1997) 41659; (Jun 1997) 41709
Ukraine
Belarusian President's visit to Ukraine (May 1997) 41660
Summit meeting (Jan 1997) 41459
USA (Mar 1997) 41550; (May 1997) 41659; (Sep 1997) 41838
Government-opposition talks collapse: (Jul 1997) 41751
Human rights: (Feb 1997) 41509; (Apr 1997) 41610
Independence Day holiday: (Jan 1997) 41459
Media:
Proposals to curb media freedom rejected by Council of the Republic (Oct 1997) 41879
Russian journalists' difficulties (Mar 1997) 41550; (Jul 1997) 41751; (Aug 1997) 41785; (Sep 1997) 41838; (Oct 1997) 41879
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE):
Delegation from disbanded legislature invited to Vienna session (Nov 1997) 41923
Joint OSCE/EU observer mission (Jan 1997) 41459
President:
Authoritarian rule condemned by Central and Eastern European presidents' summit (Sep 1997) 41839
BNF campaign for Lukashenka's resignation (Nov 1997) 41923
Cancellation of Russia visit (Oct 1997) 41879
Decree confirming national holiday (Jan 1997) 41459
Meetings with
Russian President (Mar 1997) 41551
Ukrainian President (Jan 1997) 41459

BELARUS (contd)
Union Charter with Russia signed (May 1997) 41659
Visits to
Russia (Mar 1997) 41551; (May 1997) 41659
Ukraine (May 1997) 41660
Prime Minister: Confirmed (Feb 1997) 41509
Security:
Anti-terrorism measures (Oct 1997) 41879
Attack on opposition member (Feb 1997) 41509
Bomb explosion in Minsk (Sep 1997) 41838
Demonstrations (Feb 1997) 41509; (Mar 1997) 41550
Killings, Official in Mogilev (Oct 1997) 41879; (Nov 1997) 41923
Trials: Russian journalists (Dec 1997) 41976

BELGIUM
Corruption:
Allegations against government (Jan 1997) 41466
Dassault defence bribes case (Jan 1997) 41466; (Mar 1997) 41560; (Jun 1997) 41696
Spitaels (former PS leader) (Mar 1997) 41560
Court of Cassation (Supreme Court): Di Rupo investigation reopened (Jan 1997) 41466
Drugs: (Nov 1997) 41934; (Dec 1997) 41979
Economy:
Bankruptcy of Wallonia steelworks (Feb 1997) 41514
Budget (Oct 1997) 41884–5
National debt (Jan 1997) 41466
Renault job losses (Mar 1997) 41563–4; (Apr 1997) 41602–3; (Jun 1997) 41701
Trade unions (Mar 1997) 41563–4; (Apr 1997) 41602–3
European Union (EU): Single currency (Jan 1997) 41466; (Feb 1997) 41515
Foreign relations:
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre) (Aug 1997) 41759
France (Jun 1997) 41696
Guinea (Apr 1997) 41577
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Rwanda (Apr 1997) 41574
Zaïre (May 1997) 41622
Parliamentary report on paedophile murders inquiries: (Apr 1997) 41601; (Jun 1997) 41696
Security:
Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) (Mar 1997) 41560
Anti-racism demonstrations (Nov 1997) 41934; (Dec 1997) 41979
Arms seizure (Mar 1997) 41560
Bombing in Brussels (Mar 1997) 41560
Criminal justice system reform (Oct 1997) 41885
Demonstrations (Jan 1997) 41466; (Feb 1997) 41514–15
Di Rupo (Deputy Prime Minister) investigations (Jan 1997) 41466
Killings by police of suspected drug dealers (Nov 1997) 41934; (Dec 1997) 41979
Paedophile murders (Dutroux) (Jan 1997) 41466–7; (Feb 1997) 41514–15; (Apr 1997) 41601; (Jun 1997) 41696; (Oct 1997) 41885
Strikes (Mar 1997) 41563–4
UN:
Journalist arrested for involvement in Rwandan genocide (Jul 1997) 41721
Peacekeeping troops charged with misconduct released (Jun 1997) 41696
Wallonia: Bankruptcy of steelworks (Feb 1997) 41514
Walloon Socialist Party (PS):
Corruption (Jan 1997) 41466; (Mar 1997) 41560
Paedophile murder investigation revelations (Jun 1997) 41696

BELIZE
see also CENTRAL AMERICA
Appointments: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41585
Cabinet: (Apr 1997) 41585
Foreign relations: Taiwan (Jul 1997) 41738

BELORUSSIA *see* BELARUS

BELORUSSIA *see* BELARUS (contd)
BENIN, Foreign relations: Burkina Faso (Mar 1997) 41529

BERMUDA
Appointments: Prime Minister (Mar 1997) 41537
Prime Minister: (Mar 1997) 41537
United Bermuda Party (UBP): (Mar 1997) 41537

BHUTAN
Foreign relations: India (Apr 1997) 41588
Refugees in India and Nepal: (Apr 1997) 41588
United Front for Democracy in Bhutan: (Apr 1997) 41588

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS, USA: Accused by Cuba (May 1997) 41634; (Aug 1997) 41769

BLACK SEA ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (BSEC), Foreign ministers' meeting: (Feb 1997) 41511

BOLIVIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41491; (Aug 1997) 41768
Bolivian Workers' Central (COB): (Dec 1997) 41955–6
Cabinet: (Aug 1997) 41768
Che Guevara's remains returned to Cuba: (Jul 1997) 41731–3
Corruption:
Bolivian Workers' Central (COB) (Dec 1997) 41956
Crackdown planned (Dec 1997) 41955
Democratic Nationalist Action party: (Jun 1997) 41680; (Aug 1997) 41768
Drugs:
Coca eradication (Jun 1997) 41680
Presidential action plan (Dec 1997) 41955
Economy:
Energy
Bolivia-Brazil gas pipeline (Dec 1997) 41955
Petrol prices (Dec 1997) 41955–6
Presidential action plan (Dec 1997) 41955
Trade unions (Dec 1997) 41955–6
Elections: Presidential and congressional (Jun 1997) 41680
Foreign relations:
Cuba (Jul 1997) 41731–3
USA (Jun 1997) 41680
Foreign trade: Brazil (Dec 1997) 41955
Human rights: (Jun 1997) 41680
Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR):
see also Paz Zamora
Cabinet appointments (Aug 1997) 41768
Election results (Jun 1997) 41680
National Revolutionary Movement (MNR): (Feb 1997) 41491; (Jun 1997) 41680
Paz Zamora: Alliance with Bánzer of the Democratic Nationalist Action (Jun 1997) 41680
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41680
President:
Bánzer confirmed by Congress (Aug 1997) 41768
Five-year action plan (Dec 1997) 41955
Resignations: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41491
Security: Strikes (Dec 1997) 41955–6

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
Appointments:
Brcko supervisor (Mar 1997) 41555
Central bank governor (Oct 1997) 41875
Federation President (Mar 1997) 41555
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41455
Aviation: Helicopter crash (Sep 1997) 41834
Brcko:
Appointment of supervisor (Mar 1997) 41555
Closure of election registration centres (Jun 1997) 41704
Elections ruling (May 1997) 41655
Postponement of international ruling (Feb 1997) 41504
Voter registration list (Sep 1997) 41833
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41455
Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ): (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA (contd)
Dayton peace accord: Brcko question (Feb 1997) 41504; (Mar 1997) 41555; (May 1997) 41655
Economy:
Central bank (Apr 1997) 41606; (Oct 1997) 41875
Currency agreement (Apr 1997) 41606
Debt agreement (Jul 1997) 41749
Donor conference (Jan 1997) 41456; (Jun 1997) 41704–5; (Jul 1997) 41749
"Quick start" package (Jun 1997) 41704–5
Elections:
Municipal
Postponed (Mar 1997) 41555
Preparations for (May 1997) 41655
Results (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874
Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Muslim-Croat):
Armed forces, Ethnic ratio agreed (Jun 1997) 41704
President, Soljic appointed (Mar 1997) 41555
Foreign relations:
Croatia (Aug 1997) 41790; (Oct 1997) 41875
Germany (May 1997) 41654; (Sep 1997) 41834
Israel (Sep 1997) 41841
UK (Jul 1997) 41749
USA (Jul 1997) 41749; (Aug 1997) 41790; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Dec 1997) 41978
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY)
Accord with Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serbs) (Mar 1997) 41555
Montenegro (Oct 1997) 41875
Mostar:
Bomb attack (Sep 1997) 41834
Crackdown on warlords and gangsters (Mar 1997) 41556
Municipal councils established (Jun 1997) 41704
Municipal elections (Oct 1997) 41874
Police (Mar 1997) 41556
Violence (Feb 1997) 41504; (Mar 1997) 41556
NATO:
Stabilisation force (S-For)
Action against indicted war criminals (Jul 1997) 41749; (Aug 1997) 41790
Brcko concentration (Feb 1997) 41504; (May 1997) 41655
Distress call from Plavsic in Banja Luka (Jul 1997) 41748–9
Extension of mandate called for (Nov 1997) 41933
Killing of Drljaca (war criminal) (Jul 1997) 41749
Macedonia view that NATO troops should remain (Jun 1997) 41704
Municipal elections (Sep 1997) 41833
Republika Srpska elections (Oct 1997) 41874
Seizure of television transmitters (Oct 1997) 41874
US promise to remain after end of NATO mandate (Dec 1997) 41978
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE):
Arms control agreement (Nov 1997) 41933
Bomb attacks on OSCE offices (Jul 1997) 41749
Brcko (May 1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41704; (Sep 1997) 41833
Municipal elections (Mar 1997) 41555; (May 1997) 41655; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874
Republika Srpska elections (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874; (Nov 1997) 41933
Party of Democratic Action (Muslim nationalists): (May 1997) 41655; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874
Peace Implementation Council: (Jun 1997) 41704; (Aug 1997) 41790; (Sep 1997) 41834
Political parties: (May 1997) 41655; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Dec 1997) 41979
Religious affairs: Papal visit (Apr 1997) 41606
Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serbs):
Accord with Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (Mar 1997) 41555
Appointments, Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41790
Banja Luka pre-election violence (Sep 1997) 41834
Constitutional court (Aug 1997) 41790

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA (contd)
Elections
Date set (Oct 1997) 41874
OSCE monitoring (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874; (Nov 1997) 41933
Voting (Nov 1997) 41932–3
Results (Dec 1997) 41979
Karadzic
Continuing power (Jul 1997) 41748–9
Corruption allegations (Sep 1997) 41833–4
Interview (May 1997) 41654–5
Relationship with army (Aug 1997) 41790
US refuge offer rejected (Aug 1997) 41790
Leadership dispute (Jun 1997) 41705; (Jul 1997) 41748–9; (Aug 1997) 41790; (Sep 1997) 41833–4; (Nov 1997) 41933
Media (Aug 1997) 41790; (Sep 1997) 41833
Political parties (Dec 1997) 41979
Resignations (Aug 1997) 41790
Security:
Muslims returning to Jayce expelled by Croats (Aug 1997) 41790–1
Papal visit (Apr 1997) 41606
Serb Democratic Party (SDS): (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874; (Dec 1997) 41979
Srebrenica: Municipal elections (Oct 1997) 41874
UN:
see also War crimes
Mostar police criticised (Mar 1997) 41556
Resignation of envoy for missing persons (Mar 1997) 41555–6
Support for Muslims returning to Jayce (Aug 1997) 41790–1
War crimes:
Djajic sentenced by German court (May 1997) 41654
Jongic sentenced by German court (Sep 1997) 41834
Misic charged (Nov 1997) 41933
Muslim paramilitaries (Nov 1997) 41933
S-For action against indicted criminals (Jul 1997) 41749; (Dec 1997) 41979
Suntic (Nov 1997) 41933
UN War Crimes Tribunal
Blaskic (Jun 1997) 41704
Bosnian Croat war crimes suspects (Oct 1997) 41874–5; (Dec 1997) 41979
Erdemovic appeal (Jan 1997) 41456
Extradition of alleged war criminal from Croatia (Apr 1997) 41606
Kupreskic and Furundzija (Dec 1997) 41979
Tadic (May 1997) 41654; (Jul 1997) 41749
Trial of alleged Muslim and Croat war criminals (Mar 1997) 41556

BOTSWANA
Appointments: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41803
Cabinet: (Sep 1997) 41803
Constitution: (Aug 1997) 41758
Economy:
Budget (Feb 1997) 41479–80
Central bank (Aug 1997) 41767
Environment: Ivory trade (Jun 1997) 41717
President: Retirement announcement (Nov 1997) 41899

BRAZIL
Appointments:
Central bank chief (Aug 1997) 41767
Ministerial (May 1997) 41633
Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB):
Defeat in Senate presidency election (Feb 1997) 41488
Presidential candidates (Sep 1997) 41810; (Oct 1997) 41857
Presidential re-election bill (Jan 1997) 41439
Brazilian Labour Party (PTB): Endorsement of Cardoso's re-election bid (Oct 1997) 41857
Brazilian Progressive Party (PPB):
Defeat in Chamber presidency election (Feb 1997) 41488
Sao Paulo mayor convicted of bond fraud (Dec 1997) 41954
Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB):
Chamber presidency election (Feb 1997) 41488

BRAZIL (contd)
Civil service reform (Apr 1997) 41583–4; (Jun 1997) 41679
Instability (Sep 1997) 41810–11
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41633
Constitution:
Civil service reform (Apr 1997) 41583–4; (Jun 1997) 41679; (Jul 1997) 41729
Presidential re-election bill (Jan 1997) 41439; (Feb 1997) 41488; (May 1997) 41633; (Jun 1997) 41679
Corruption:
Bribery of deputies allegations (May 1997) 41633
Sao Paulo bond scandal (Mar 1997) 41532–3; (Jul 1997) 41729; (Dec 1997) 41954
Workers' Party (PT) (Jun 1997) 41679; (Jul 1997) 41729–30
Democratic Labour Party (PDT): (Sep 1997) 41810
Economy:
Banking (Dec 1997) 41954
Budget deficit reduced (Feb 1997) 41488–9
Central Bank (Feb 1997) 41489; (Nov 1997) 41905
Civil service (Feb 1997) 41489; (Apr 1997) 41583–4; (Jul 1997) 41729; (Nov 1997) 41905–6
Coffee crop (Jan 1997) 41475
Emergency fiscal package (Nov 1997) 41905–6; (Dec 1997) 41954
Energy, Bolivia-Brazil gas pipeline (Dec 1997) 41955
Import financing controversy (Apr 1997) 41585
Interest rates (Feb 1997) 41489
Oil monopoly ended (Mar 1997) 41532
Privatisation (Apr 1997) 41584; (May 1997) 41633
Social Emergency Fund (FSE) renewed (Jul 1997) 41729
State debt refinancing agreement (Dec 1997) 41954
Trade unions (Nov 1997) 41905–6
Elections: Presidential, Candidates (Sep 1997) 41810–11; (Oct 1997) 41857; (Dec 1997) 41954
Environment: Matto Grosso state removal of gold prospectors and loggers (Jan 1997) 41439
Foreign relations:
Argentina (Aug 1997) 41768; (Oct 1997) 41858
USA (Oct 1997) 41857
Foreign trade:
Bolivia (Dec 1997) 41955
South American Common Market (Mercosur) (Apr 1997) 41585
Human rights: (Apr 1997) 41584; (Jul 1997) 41730
Indigenous peoples: National Indian Foundation (Funai) (Jul 1997) 41730
Landless Workers Movement (MST): (Jan 1997) 41439; (Apr 1997) 41584; (May 1997) 41633; (Jun 1997) 41679; (Aug 1997) 41767
Liberal Front Party (PFL): (Jan 1997) 41439; (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41532; (Sep 1997) 41810
Political parties: (Sep 1997) 41810; (Oct 1997) 41857
President:
Endorsement of re-election bid by PMBD (Oct 1997) 41857
Re-election bill (Jan 1997) 41439; (Feb 1997) 41488; (May 1997) 41633; (Jun 1997) 41679
Religious affairs: Catholic Church objections to privatisation of iron-ore company (May 1997) 41633
Rural Democratic Union (UDR): (Jan 1997) 41439; (Aug 1997) 41767
Sao Paulo:
Bond scandal (Mar 1997) 41532–3; (Jul 1997) 41729; (Dec 1997) 41954
Governor (Sep 1997) 41811
Mayor convicted of bond fraud (Dec 1997) 41954
Security:
Land occupations (Aug 1997) 41767
Police brutality (Apr 1997) 41584
Police strikes (Jul 1997) 41729

BRAZIL (contd)
Rural tension (Jan 1997) 41439; (Apr 1997) 41584
Social Progress Party (PPS): (Sep 1997) 41810
Social security reform: (Feb 1997) 41488
Storms and floods: (Jan 1997) 41439; (Oct 1997) 41857
Trials:
Landless Workers Movement (MST) leader (Jun 1997) 41679
Police officers (May 1997) 41633
Sao Paulo mayor (Dec 1997) 41954
Tobacco compensation ruling (Sep 1997) 41811
Workers' Party (PT):
Corruption investigations (Jun 1997) 41679; (Jul 1997) 41729–30
Defections (Sep 1997) 41810
Presidential candidate (Oct 1997) 41857; (Dec 1997) 41954

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, UK initiative to counter money laundering: (Jan 1997) 41443

BRUNEI, Appointments: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41595

BULGARIA
Appointments:
Media chiefs controversy (Nov 1997) 41930
Military (Jun 1997) 41703
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41506; (Mar 1997) 41558; (May 1997) 41653
Bulgarian Business Bloc (BBB) parliamentary group disbanded: (Sep 1997) 41832
Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP):
Economic crisis (Jan 1997) 41453
Executive bureau elected (Jan 1997) 41453
Mandate relinquished (Feb 1997) 41506
Refusal to dissolve National Assembly (Jan 1997) 41453
Relations with Bulgarian Business Bloc (BBB) (Sep 1997) 41832
Response to publication of list of former informants (Oct 1997) 41876
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41506; (May 1997) 41653
Constitution: (Jan 1997) 41453; (Nov 1997) 41930
Defence: NATO (Jan 1997) 41453; (Feb 1997) 41506; (Apr 1997) 41604; (May 1997) 41652–3; (Oct 1997) 41876
Disasters: Mine explosion (Sep 1997) 41832
Dismissals:
Military (Jun 1997) 41703
Oil refinery directors (Feb 1997) 41506
Economy:
Banking (May 1997) 41653; (Jul 1997) 41746; (Sep 1997) 41832
Budget (Oct 1997) 41876; (Nov 1997) 41930; (Dec 1997) 41978
Central bank (Jun 1997) 41703; (Jul 1997) 41746
Crisis (Jan 1997) 41452–3
Currency control board (Jun 1997) 41703; (Jul 1997) 41746
Debt (Jan 1997) 41453
Foreign investment legislation (Sep 1997) 41832
Gas agreement with Russia (Oct 1997) 41876
IMF (Jan 1997) 41453; (Feb 1997) 41506; (Mar 1997) 41558; (Apr 1997) 41604–5; (May 1997) 41653; (Jun 1997) 41703; (Oct 1997) 41876
New loans (May 1997) 41653; (Nov 1997) 41930
Oil refinery directors dismissed (Feb 1997) 41506
Privatisation (Mar 1997) 41558; (May 1997) 41653; (Jul 1997) 41746–7; (Oct 1997) 41876
Restitution law (Nov 1997) 41930
Working council to stabilise the economy (Feb 1997) 41506
World Bank (May 1997) 41653; (Sep 1997) 41832; (Nov 1997) 41930
Elections:
Timetable (Feb 1997) 41506
Results (Apr 1997) 41604
Euro-Left: (Feb 1997) 41506
Foreign relations:
European Union (EU)

BULGARIA (contd)
Aid offer (Jan 1997) 41453
Membership aim (Apr 1997) 41604; (Oct 1997) 41876; (Dec 1997) 41968
Francophonie group of countries (Nov 1997) 41940
Romania (Oct 1997) 41876
Turkey (Oct 1997) 41876; (Dec 1997) 41978
Foreign trade: Russia (Oct 1997) 41876
Media: (Nov 1997) 41930
National Assembly: Adoption of national salvation declaration (May 1997) 41652–3
Political parties: (Apr 1997) 41604; (May 1997) 41652–3; (Sep 1997) 41832
President:
see also Elections
Inauguration of Stoyanov (Jan 1997) 41453
Stoyanov/Dobrev agreement on general election (Feb 1997) 41506
Summit with Presidents of Romania and Turkey (Oct 1997) 41876
Visit to Belgium (talks with EU and NATO officials) (Jan 1997) 41453
Prime Minister:
Dobrev nominated to replace Videnov (Jan 1997) 41453
Kostov (Apr 1997) 41604; (May 1997) 41653; (Jun 1997) 41703
Real Reform Movement (DESIR): (Jun 1997) 41703
Resignations: State Savings Bank president (May 1997) 41653
Security:
List of former collaborators published (Oct 1997) 41876
Strikes and demonstrations (Jan 1997) 41452–3; (Feb 1997) 41506
Trials: Videnov (former Prime Minister) to be prosecuted for bread shortage (Mar 1997) 41558
Union of Democratic Forces (UDF):
Dissolution of National Assembly called for (Jan 1997) 41453
Economic crisis (Jan 1997) 41453
Economic policy (Jun 1997) 41703
Election victory (Apr 1997) 41604
National conference (Feb 1997) 41506
National salvation declaration (May 1997) 41652–3
Objections to new Cabinet (Feb 1997) 41506
Zhivkov (former communist leader): Release from house arrest reported (Jan 1997) 41453–4

BURKINA FASO
Appointments: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41671–2
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41671–2
Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP): (May 1997) 41625; (Jun 1997) 41671–2
Defence: Military exercises (Mar 1997) 41529
Elections:
Timetable (Feb 1997) 41481
Results (May 1997) 41625; (Jun 1997) 41672
Foreign relations:
Benin (Mar 1997) 41529
France (Mar 1997) 41529
Togo (Mar 1997) 41529
Political parties: (May 1997) 41625

BURMA
Appointments: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41915; (Dec 1997) 41963
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) membership question: (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736; (Aug 1997) 41776; (Sep 1997) 41823
Cabinet: (Nov 1997) 41915; (Dec 1997) 41963
Disasters: Sinking of passenger ship (Mar 1997) 41545
Drugs: Anti-trafficking agreement with Philippines (Oct 1997) 41870
Economy:
IMF report (Mar 1997) 41545
Withdrawal of PepsiCo (Jan 1997) 41451
Foreign relations:
European Union (EU) (Feb 1997) 41501; (Nov 1997) 41919

BURMA (contd)
Indonesia (Sep 1997) 41821
Philippines (Oct 1997) 41870
Thailand (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41544; (May 1997) 41642
UK (Feb 1997) 41501; (Sep 1997) 41823
USA (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736
Foreign trade:
European Union (EU) (Feb 1997) 41501
Japan (Feb 1997) 41501
USA (Jan 1997) 41451; (Feb 1997) 41501; (Apr 1997) 41594
Human rights: (Feb 1997) 41502; (Apr 1997) 41594; (Jun 1997) 41684; 41686; (Aug 1997) 41776
Karen people:
Karen National Union (KNU)
Bomb attack on SLORC official denied (Apr 1997) 41594
Fighting with SLORC forces (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41544–5; (May 1997) 41642
National League for Democracy (NLD):
Approval of resolutions (Jun 1997) 41684
Congress held at home of Aung San Suu Kyi (Sep 1997) 41821
Deaths in custody of leading members (Jun 1997) 41684; (Oct 1997) 41870
Government claims of NLD split (Dec 1997) 41963
Imprisonments (Jan 1997) 41451; (Aug 1997) 41776; (Dec 1997) 41963
Release of activists (Jun 1997) 41684
Aung San Suu Kyi
Insistence on personal involvement in any dialogue with SLORC (Aug 1997) 41776
Prevented from attending NLD meeting (Oct 1997) 41870
Obituary of Saw Maung (former SLORC chairman): (Jul 1997) 41741
Refugees to Thailand: (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41545
Religious affairs: Anti-Muslim riots (Mar 1997) 41544
Security:
see also Karen people
Anti-Muslim riots in Mandalay (Mar 1997) 41544
Bomb attack on SLORC official (Apr 1997) 41594
Continuing closure of universities and colleges (Aug 1997) 41776
Imprisonment of opposition activists (Aug 1997) 41776
Intelligence difficulties (Jun 1997) 41684
State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC):
Curfew imposed on Mandalay (Mar 1997) 41544
Death of Saw Maung (Jul 1997) 41741
Dissolution (Nov 1997) 41915
Leadership speculation (Jun 1997) 41684
Ne Win (former "strongman") visit to Indonesia (Sep 1997) 41821
Offensive against KNU (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41544–5; (May 1997) 41642
Schools reopened (Aug 1997) 41776
State Peace and Development Council (SPDC):
Members (Nov 1997) 41915; (Dec 1997) 41963
Replacement for SLORC (Nov 1997) 41915
Trials: Sentencing of student protestors (Jan 1997) 41451

BURUNDI
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41622; (Aug 1997) 41762
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41622
Death penalty: (Aug 1997) 41762; (Sep 1997) 41801
Defence:
Armed forces, Massacres of Hutus *see* Hutus *below*
Border clashes with Tanzania (Oct 1997) 41851; (Nov 1997) 41897
Foreign relations:
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre) (Sep 1997) 41801
Ethiopia (Sep 1997) 41801

BURUNDI (contd)
Rwanda (Sep 1997) 41801
Tanzania (Aug 1997) 41762; (Sep 1997) 41801; (Oct 1997) 41851; (Nov 1997) 41897
Uganda (Sep 1997) 41801
Zimbabwe (Sep 1997) 41801
Front for Democracy in Burundi (Frodebu):
Allegations of atrocities (Apr 1997) 41574
Imprisonment of leader (Feb 1997) 41478
Official party status temporarily suspended (Dec 1997) 41950
Refugee camps described as "concentration camps" for Hutus (Feb 1997) 41478
Human rights:
see also Refugees
Government forcibly "regrouping" people (Mar 1997) 41526
Hutus:
see also Front for Democracy in Burundi (Frodebu)
Attacks by Hutu extremists (Mar 1997) 41526; (May 1997) 41622
Deaths in a relocation camp (Feb 1997) 41478
Fighting between rival groups (Aug 1997) 41761–2
Massacres by armed forces (Jan 1997) 41432; (Mar 1997) 41526; (Apr 1997) 41574; (May 1997) 41622; (Jun 1997) 41670
National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) (Apr 1997) 41574; (Jul 1997) 41721; (Aug 1997) 41761–2
Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (Palipehutu) (Jul 1997) 41721; (Aug 1997) 41761–2
Ntibantunganya (former President): Return to politics (Jun 1997) 41669
Peace process:
Appointment of "peace" minister (Aug 1997) 41762
Difficulties (Jun 1997) 41669–70; (Aug 1997) 41762
Regional summit warning to Burundi government (Sep 1997) 41801
President:
Assassination plot foiled (Mar 1997) 41526
Buyoya meeting with African heads of state to discuss crisis (Apr 1997) 41574
International support called on to support peace process (Jun 1997) 41669–70
Refugees:
Allegations of ill-treatment in Tanzanian camps (Nov 1997) 41897
Dangerous conditions in camps (Apr 1997) 41574
Expulsion from Tanzania (Oct 1997) 41851
From fighting in Makamba (Apr 1997) 41574
Massacres of returnees from Tanzania (Jan 1997) 41432
To Tanzania (Jul 1997) 41721
Visit by UN High Commissioner for Refugees (Feb 1997) 41478
Security:
see also Defence; Hutus
Assassination of president plot foiled (Mar 1997) 41526
Bujumbura killings by anti-tank mines (Mar 1997) 41526
Killings and lawlessness (Jun 1997) 41669–70; (Jul 1997) 41721; (Sep 1997) 41801; (Nov 1997) 41897
Supreme Court: Status of Frodebu (Dec 1997) 41950
Trials:
1993 massacres (Aug 1997) 41762
Alleged 1993 coup plotters (May 1997) 41622; (Sep 1997) 41801
Tutsis: National Rehabilitation Party (PARENA) (Mar 1997) 41526
UN:
Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA) report (Apr 1997) 41574
Intervention requested in dispute with Tanzania (Oct 1997) 41851
Peace conference organised by UNESCO postponed (Jun 1997) 41670

BURUNDI (contd)
Rejection of genocide tribunal proposal (Jul 1997) 41721
Report on regroupment camps (Mar 1997) 41526
Visit by UN High Commissioner for Refugees (Feb 1997) 41478

BYELARUS *see* BELARUS

C

CAMBODIA
Appointments: First Prime Minister (Aug 1997) 41776
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN):
Condemnation of coup (Jul 1997) 41734; (Aug 1997) 41776
Membership (May 1997) 41642; (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736
Aviation: Crash of Vietnamese airliner (Sep 1997) 41822
Cabinet: (Sep 1997) 41822
Cambodian Farmers' Party (CFP): (May 1997) 41642
Cambodian People's Party (CPP):
Blamed for attack on KNP and Sam Rangsi (Mar 1997) 41545
Congress (Oct 1997) 41870
Coup ousting Ranariddh (of Funcinpec) (Jul 1997) 41733–4
Joined by Khmer Republican Democratic Party (KRDP) (May 1997) 41642
Tensions with Funcinpec (Feb 1997) 41500–1; (Apr 1997) 41594; (Jun 1997) 41683
Economy: US aid cut (Oct 1997) 41870
Elections: Timetable (Dec 1997) 41961
Environment: Logging report (Sep 1997) 41822
Foreign relations:
Japan (Jul 1997) 41734
Korea, South (Nov 1997) 41917
USA (Jun 1997) 41683; (Jul 1997) 41734; (Oct 1997) 41870
Funcinpec party:
Defections to CPP (Apr 1997) 41594
Negotiations with Khmers Rouges (Mar 1997) 41545; (Jun 1997) 41683; (Jul 1997) 41733
Ranariddh ousted by Hun Sen in coup (Jul 1997) 41733–4; (Aug 1997) 41776
Rebel group (anti Ranariddh) leadership (Jun 1997) 41684
Tensions with CPP (Feb 1997) 41500–1; (Apr 1997) 41594; (Jun 1997) 41683
Human rights:
Interviews with Khmer Rouge leaders (Oct 1997) 41870
UN report on coup atrocities (Sep 1997) 41821–2
Khmer National Party (KNP):
Grenade attack on Sam Rangsi (Mar 1997) 41545
Rangsi replaced as leader by Kong Muni (Aug 1997) 41776–7
Khmers Rouges:
Agreement with Funcinpec (cause of Hun Sen coup) (Jul 1997) 41733
Khmer Republican Democratic Party (KRDP) alliance with CPP (May 1997) 41642
Killing of Son Sen (Jun 1997) 41683
National Solidarity Party (Aug 1997) 41776
Negotiations with government (Mar 1997) 41545; (Jun 1997) 41683
Pol Pot
Interviewed (Oct 1997) 41870
Kidnapping of Khieu Samphan reported (Jun 1997) 41683
Speculation as to whereabouts (Jun 1997) 41683
Trial (Aug 1997) 41776
Ta Mok (Mar 1997) 41545; (Jun 1997) 41683; (Aug 1997) 41776; (Oct 1997) 41870
UN inquiry (Dec 1997) 41961–2
Victories reported (Nov 1997) 41917
King Sihanouk:

CAMBODIA (contd)
Call for Hun Sen to negotiate with Ranariddh (Sep 1997) 41821
Departure for medical treatment (Oct 1997) 41870
Map: (Jun 1997) 41684
National Assembly: Rejection of Hun Sen proposals for Cabinet appointments (Sep 1997) 41822
Pailin: Status of (Nov 1997) 41917
Prime Ministers:
Hun Sen
CPP congress (Oct 1997) 41870
Meetings with
Ieng Sary (Khmer Rouge defector) (Nov 1997) 41917
Ranariddh (May 1997) 41642
Sam Rangsi (Dec 1997) 41961
Rejection of negotiations with Ranariddh (Sep 1997) 41821
Seizure of power (Jul 1997) 41733–4; (Aug 1997) 41776
Ing Huot, Appointment (Jul 1997) 41734; (Aug 1997) 41776
Ranariddh, Position following Hun Sen coup (Jul 1997) 41734; (Sep 1997) 41821
Refugees to Thailand: (Dec 1997) 41961
Security:
Attack on Hun Sen (May 1997) 41642
Fighting between CPP and Funcinpec forces (Feb 1997) 41500–1; (Jun 1997) 41683; (Jul 1997) 41733–4; (Aug 1997) 41776; (Sep 1997) 41821; (Dec 1997) 41961
Grenade attack on Sam Rangsi (Mar 1997) 41545
UN:
General Assembly seat controversy (Sep 1997) 41822
Khmers Rouges inquiry (Dec 1997) 41961–2
Report on coup atrocities (Sep 1997) 41821–2
Uphold the Cambodian Nation Party (new grouping): (Jun 1997) 41683

CAMEROON
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41946
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41946
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM): (Apr 1997) 41576–7; (May 1997) 41624; (Oct 1997) 41849
Corruption: Edzoa arrested for embezzlement (Jul 1997) 41725
Economy: IMF loan (Aug 1997) 41763
Elections:
Legislative
Postponed (Feb 1997) 41483
Rescheduled (Apr 1997) 41577
Results (May 1997) 41624
Presidential
Candidates (Apr 1997) 41576–7; (Jul 1997) 41725
Re-election of Biya (Oct 1997) 41849
Foreign relations: France (Aug 1997) 41763
Human rights: (Jul 1997) 41725
National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP): (Dec 1997) 41946
Political parties: (May 1997) 41624; (Oct 1997) 41849; (Dec 1997) 41946
President: Landslide victory for Biya (Oct 1997) 41849
Resignations: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41576–7
Security:
Electoral fraud and violence (May 1997) 41624
Instability in English-speaking province (Apr 1997) 41577
Social Democratic Front (SDF): (Apr 1997) 41577; (May 1997) 41624; (Oct 1997) 41849

CANADA
AIDS: Contaminated blood report (Nov 1997) 41904
Alberta: Provincial elections (Mar 1997) 41532
Appointments:
Liberal senators (Sep 1997) 41808–9
Military (Sep 1997) 41809
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41679
Supreme Court (Oct 1997) 41856

CANADA (contd)
Bloc Quebecois (BQ): Election of leader (Mar 1997) 41532
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41679
Corruption: Labour Party fundraising allegations (Oct 1997) 41856
Defence:
Armed forces
Brutality allegations (Jan 1997) 41438
Chief of Defence Staff (Sep 1997) 41809
Sexual harassment case (Jan 1997) 41438
UN missions
Haiti (Jan 1997) 41438
Somalia (Jul 1997) 41728
Economy:
Budget (Feb 1997) 41486; (Oct 1997) 41855–6
Postal strike (Nov 1997) 41903–4; (Dec 1997) 41957
Taxation (Feb 1997) 41486
Top rank on Human Development Index (HDI) (Jun 1997) 41718
Education: (Nov 1997) 41903–4
Elections:
Alberta (Mar 1997) 41532
General
Announced (Apr 1997) 41581
Results (Jun 1997) 41678
Environment: Fisheries, Seizures of US trawlers (May 1997) 41630
Foreign relations:
Cuba (Jan 1997) 41442
Jordan (Sep 1997) 41841
Mexico (Oct 1997) 41856
Nigeria (Mar 1997) 41528
Peru (Feb 1997) 41488
Saudi Arabia (Mar 1997) 41568; (May 1997) 41630
USA (Apr 1997) 41581–2; (May 1997) 41630
Foreign trade: Cuba (Apr 1997) 41581–2
Human rights: (Jan 1997) 41442
Labour Party: Fundraising allegations (Oct 1997) 41856
Landmines treaty: (Dec 1997) 41984
Liberal Party:
Alberta (Mar 1997) 41532
Election victory (Jun 1997) 41678
Map: (Jun 1997) 41678
New Democratic Party (NDP):
Alberta (Mar 1997) 41532
Election results (Jun 1997) 41678
Ontario: Cabinet reshuffle (Oct 1997) 41856
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41678; (Sep 1997) 41808–9
Prime Minister: Visit to USA (Apr 1997) 41581–2
Progressive Conservative Party (PCP):
Alberta election success (Mar 1997) 41532
Election results (Jun 1997) 41678
Ontario (Oct 1997) 41856
Quebec:
Calgary declaration on "unique" character of Quebec (Sep 1997) 41808
Parti Québécois (PQ) (May 1997) 41630; (Jun 1997) 41678
UDI intention revelation (May 1997) 41630
Reform Party: (Mar 1997) 41532; (Jun 1997) 41678
Religious affairs: Solar Temple cult deaths (Mar 1997) 41532
Resignations: BQ member (Mar 1997) 41532
Security:
Arrest of Saudi Al-Khobar bomb suspect (Mar 1997) 41568; (May 1997) 41630
Strikes (Nov 1997) 41903–4; (Dec 1997) 41957
Senate: Appointment of Liberal senators (Sep 1997) 41808–9
Social Credit Party: (Mar 1997) 41532
Supreme Court: Appointment of justice (Oct 1997) 41856
Trials:
Mulroney libel case out-of-court settlement (Jan 1997) 41438; (Oct 1997) 41855
Somalia peacekeeping inquiry (Jul 1997) 41728
War crimes: Nazi gold laundering (Jul 1997) 41757

CARIBBEAN
Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI): (May 1997) 41634
Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom):
Banana exports (Jun 1997) 41683
Foreign ministers' meeting (Jun 1997) 41683
Haiti membership approved (Jul 1997) 41731
Montserrat volcano crisis (Aug 1997) 41769
Relations with South American Common Market (Mercosur) (Feb 1997) 41491
Summit (Feb 1997) 41490–1; (Jul 1997) 41731
Cariforum (Caricom plus Haiti and Dominican Republic): (Feb 1997) 41491
Foreign relations: Taiwan (Jul 1997) 41738
Foreign trade: European Union (EU) (Feb 1997) 41490–1; (May 1997) 41635; 41651; (Jun 1997) 41683
Summit: (May 1997) 41634–5
UK initiative to counter money laundering: (Jan 1997) 41443

CAYMAN ISLANDS
Corruption: Bank scandal (Oct 1997) 41859
Dismissals: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41859

CEFTA *see* EUROPE, Central European Free Trade Agreement

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)
Appointments:
Military (Apr 1997) 41576
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41481
Armed forces: *see* Security
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41481; (May 1997) 41624; (Sep 1997) 41801
Defence: Withdrawal of French troops (Oct 1997) 41848–9; (Dec 1997) 41950
Ethnic issues: Yakoma army mutineers (Feb 1997) 41481
Foreign relations: France (Jan 1997) 41430–1; (Apr 1997) 41576; (Aug 1997) 41763; (Oct 1997) 41848; (Dec 1997) 41950
Movement for the Liberation of the Centrafrican People (MLPC): (Feb 1997) 41481
Obituary of peacekeeping force commander: (Oct 1997) 41848
President: Acceptance of mutineers' demands (Apr 1997) 41576
Resignations: Ministerial (May 1997) 41624
Security:
Amnesty for those involved in army mutiny (Mar 1997) 41526
Army mutinies (Jan 1997) 41430–1; (Feb 1997) 41481; (Mar 1997) 41526
Ceasefire agreement between mutinous soldiers and MISAB (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759–60
Collection of illegally-held weapons (Aug 1997) 41760
Fighting in Bangui (Apr 1997) 41576; (May 1997) 41624; (Jun 1997) 41671
Fighting between French troops and mutineers (Jan 1997) 41430–1
Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Bangui Accords (MISAB) (Feb 1997) 41481; (Mar 1997) 41526; (Apr 1997) 41576; (Jun 1997) 41671; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759–60; (Oct 1997) 41848; (Dec 1997) 41950

CENTRAL AMERICA
Managua Declaration: (Sep 1997) 41813
Summit: (May 1997) 41634

CENTRAL ASIAN STATES
see also KAZAKHSTAN; KYRGYZSTAN; UZBEKISTAN
Presidential summit: (Jul 1997) 41741

CHAD
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41626
Armed forces: (Apr 1997) 41578
Armed Resistance against Anti-Democratic Forces (RAFAD): Opposition group launched in Nigeria (Aug 1997) 41761

CHAD (contd)
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41626
Chadian National Front (FNT): (Oct 1997) 41852
Death penalty: Summary executions alleged (Jan 1997) 41433
Dismissals: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41900
Elections: Legislative (Feb 1997) 41482
Foreign relations:
France (Aug 1997) 41763
Morocco (May 1997) 41664
Taiwan (Aug 1997) 41770
Western Sahara (May 1997) 41664
Human rights: (Jan 1997) 41433; (Apr 1997) 41578
Movement for Social Justice and Democracy (MJSD): (Oct 1997) 41852
Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS): Election results (Feb 1997) 41482
Political parties: (Feb 1997) 41482
President:
Declaration on crime (Jan 1997) 41433
Legislative election success for Déby (Feb 1997) 41482
Refugees: Return promises (Oct 1997) 41852
Renewed National Front of Chad (FNTR): (Oct 1997) 41852
Security:
Crime (Jan 1997) 41433
National reconciliation agreement (Oct 1997) 41852
Peace agreements with
Armed Forces for a Federal Republic (FARF) (Apr 1997) 41578; (May 1997) 41626–7
Chadian National Liberation Front-People's Armed Forces (Frolinat-FAP) (Aug 1997) 41761
Return of Barde (former leader of FARF) (May 1997) 41626
Union for Renewal and Democracy (URD):
Election results (Feb 1997) 41482

CHEMICAL WEAPONS
Chemical Weapons Convention: (Apr 1997) 41616–17; (May 1997) 41638; 41666; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Nov 1997) 41941
China: (May 1997) 41638; (Aug 1997) 41797
Gulf War syndrome:
UK (Feb 1997) 41515
USA (Oct 1997) 41855
India: (Aug 1997) 41797
Iran: (May 1997) 41638; (Nov 1997) 41941
Iraq:
Discovered in 1992 by UN monitors (Aug 1997) 41797
Gulf War (Apr 1997) 41580
US statement on Iraqi capability (Nov 1997) 41938
Korea, South (Aug 1997) 41797
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW): (May 1997) 41666; (Nov 1997) 41941
Russia: (Apr 1997) 41617; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Nov 1997) 41941
USA: (Apr 1997) 41617; (Aug 1997) 41797

CHILDREN *see* HUMAN RIGHTS; UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

CHILE
Appointments:
Military (Oct 1997) 41858; (Nov 1997) 41906
Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41730
Armed forces: Appointments (Nov 1997) 41906
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41730
Christian Democratic Party (PDC): (May 1997) 41635; (Sep 1997) 41811; (Dec 1997) 41955
Constitution: Senate (Jul 1997) 41730
Earthquake: (Oct 1997) 41858
Economy: Budget (Oct 1997) 41858
Elections: Legislative (Dec 1997) 41955
Foreign relations:
Argentina (Aug 1997) 41768
Spain (Oct 1997) 41858
Switzerland (Sep 1997) 41811
USA (Oct 1997) 41858

CHILE (contd)
Human rights: (Jul 1997) 41730; (Oct 1997) 41858
Manual Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR): (Jan 1997) 41440; (Jul 1997) 41730; (Sep 1997) 41811
Obituary of Almeyda: (Sep 1997) 41811
Party for Democracy (PPD): (Sep 1997) 41811; (Dec 1997) 41955
Political parties: (Dec 1997) 41955
Popular Christian Party (PPC): (May 1997) 41635
Security:
Arrest of FPMR fugitive in Switzerland (Sep 1997) 41811
German colony raided (Jul 1997) 41730
National intelligence system announcement (Jan 1997) 41440
Prison break-out by guerrillas (Jan 1997) 41440
Student protests (Jul 1997) 41730
Senate:
Attempt to prevent Pinochet from becoming senator for life (Sep 1997) 41811
Military voice (Nov 1997) 41906
Reform failure (Jul 1997) 41730
Socialist Party (PS): (Sep 1997) 41811; (Dec 1997) 41955
Supreme Court: Judicial reform pressure (Jul 1997) 41730
Trials: Guerrillas sentenced (Jul 1997) 41730

CHINA
Appointments: CCP organs (Sep 1997) 41813
Arms trade:
Kuwait (Nov 1997) 41936
Landmines (Sep 1997) 41845
Thailand (Apr 1997) 41595
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (Nov 1997) 41933
Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS): (Mar 1997) 41541; (Jul 1997) 41738
Chemical weapons: (May 1997) 41638; (Aug 1997) 41797
Chinese Communist Party (CCP):
Appointments (Sep 1997) 41813
Congress (Aug 1997) 41770; (Sep 1997) 41813–14
Constitutional amendments (Sep 1997) 41814
Expulsions
Chang Zheng (Nov 1997) 41912
Chen Xitong (Sep 1997) 41814
Heilongjiang province (Jul 1997) 41741
Letter from Zhao Ziyang (Jiang's predecessor) (Sep 1997) 41814
Standing Committee (Sep 1997) 41813–14
Corruption:
CCP official expelled from party (Nov 1997) 41912
Chen Xiaotong sentenced (Aug 1997) 41770
Chen Xitong (Sep 1997) 41814
President Jiang's speech to CCP congress (Sep 1997) 41813
Shanghai securities chief (Feb 1997) 41493
Special Case Investigation Section (SCIS) (anti-corruption office) (Jan 1997) 41446
Criminal code revision: (Mar 1997) 41540
Death penalty: (Feb 1997) 41493; (Apr 1997) 41589; (May 1997) 41638; (Aug 1997) 41771
Defence:
Armed forces
National Defence Law approved (Mar 1997) 41540
Reductions (Sep 1997) 41813
Deng Xiaoping:
Biographical television series (Jan 1997) 41445
Health (Jan 1997) 41445
Death and obituary (Feb 1997) 41491–2
Disasters: Coal mine explosions (Mar 1997) 41541; (Jun 1997) 41690; (Nov 1997) 41912
Economy:
Banking (Dec 1997) 41960
Budget (Mar 1997) 41540
Energy (Nov 1997) 41912
State-owned enterprises (SOEs) reform (Sep

CHINA (contd)
1997) 41813; (Oct 1997) 41860; (Dec 1997) 41960
Stock exchange controls (Aug 1997) 41770
Unemployment (Oct 1997) 41860
Environment: Yangtze river dam project (Nov 1997) 41912
Foreign relations:
Argentina (Oct 1997) 41858
Denmark (May 1997) 41589
European Union (EU) (May 1997) 41589
France (Jan 1997) 41445; (May 1997) 41637
Guatemala (Jan 1997) 41441
Japan
Fisheries agreement (Nov 1997) 41909
Germ warfare lawsuit against Japan (Aug 1997) 41771
Hashimoto
Tour of ASEAN countries (Jan 1997) 41445
Visit to China (Sep 1997) 41816
Islands dispute (May 1997) 41640
Japanese grant aid resumed (Mar 1997) 41541
Li Peng's visit to Japan (Nov 1997) 41909
US-Japan defence co-operation guidelines (Jun 1997) 41687; (Aug 1997) 41771; (Sep 1997) 41816
Kazakhstan (Apr 1997) 41589; (Sep 1997) 41818
Korea, North
see also KOREA, NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS, Four country talks
Food aid (Jul 1997) 41737
Hwang's defection via Beijing embassy (Feb 1997) 41494–5; (Mar 1997) 41538–9
Kyrgyzstan (Apr 1997) 41589
Liberia (Sep 1997) 41814–15
Macedonia (Jun 1997) 41704
Malaysia (Nov 1997) 41911
Panama (Sep 1997) 41810
Papua New Guinea (Sep 1997) 41825
Philippines, Spratly Islands dispute (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41686
Russia (Apr 1997) 41589; (Jun 1997) 41690; (Nov 1997) 41911–12
St Lucia (Aug 1997) 41770
Singapore (Nov 1997) 41911
South Africa (Dec 1997) 41948
Taiwan
Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan (Mar 1997) 41541
Demonstrations against China's Hong Kong policy (Jun 1997) 41690
Hijacking incident (Mar 1997) 41541; (May 1997) 41639
Islands dispute (May 1997) 41640
Repatriation of mainland hijackers (Jul 1997) 41738
Reunification emphasised at Hong Kong handover (Jul 1997) 41732
Sea links restoration accord (Jan 1997) 41446; (Apr 1997) 41590
Taiwanese military exercise (Jun 1997) 41690
Visit by Chinese official (Aug 1997) 41770
WHO application rejected by China (May 1997) 41639
Tajikistan (Apr 1997) 41589
Thailand (Apr 1997) 41595

UK *see* HONG KONG

USA
Anger at Clinton's meeting with dissident Wei (Dec 1997) 41960
Chinese army chief's visit to USA (Aug 1997) 41771
Chinese Foreign Minister's visit (Apr 1997) 41589
Democratic Party campaign fund allegations (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41529–30; (Apr 1997) 41580; (Jul 1997) 41725; (Nov 1997) 41902
Hong Kong (Mar 1997) 41541; 41542; (Apr 1997) 41589
Human rights (Jan 1997) 41445–6; (Feb 1997) 41493
Jiang's visit to USA (Oct 1997) 41860

USA (contd)
Trade deficit with China (Oct 1997) 41860
Visits by US
military chief (May 1997) 41638
Secretary of State (Feb 1997) 41493
Vice-President (Mar 1997) 41541
Vietnam
Dispute over oil and gas reserves (Mar 1997) 41545–6; (Apr 1997) 41594; (Nov 1997) 41917
Visit of Do Muoi to China (Jul 1997) 41734
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (Nov 1997) 41933
Foreign trade:
Kuwait (Nov 1997) 41936
Russia (Nov 1997) 41912
Taiwan
Banking joint venture (Jan 1997) 41446
Investment in China regulations (May 1997) 41639–40; (Jun 1997) 41690
USA
Boeing sale (Mar 1997) 41541
Information Technology (Oct 1997) 41860
MFN status renewed (May 1997) 41637–8
Nuclear technology (Oct 1997) 41860
Sanctions on companies suspected of selling chemical weapons (May 1997) 41638
Textiles accord (Feb 1997) 41493
World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Oct 1997) 41860
Hong Kong: *see* HONG KONG
Human rights:
Critical resolution defeated at UN (Apr 1997) 41589
Labour activists imprisoned (Jun 1997) 41689–90
Releases of dissidents (Nov 1997) 41912
Reprieve for four Tiananmen Square protestors (Jun 1997) 41689
State Council white paper on religious freedom (Oct 1997) 41860
US protests concerning (Oct 1997) 41860
US report (Jan 1997) 41445–6
Wei Jingsheng released for medical treatment in USA (Nov 1997) 41912; (Dec 1997) 41960
Workers' protests over wage arrears (Oct 1997) 41860
LI Peng:
Address to National People's Congress (Mar 1997) 41540
Africa tour (May 1997) 41638
Meeting with Russian Prime Minister (Jun 1997) 41690
Visits to
Japan (Nov 1997) 41909
Kazakhstan (Sep 1997) 41818
Maps: (Apr 1997) 41590; (May 1997) 41640
Media:
Internet service launched by Murdoch group (Jan 1997) 41446
TV series on life of Deng (Jan 1997) 41445
National People's Congress (NPC): Annual session (Mar 1997) 41540
Nuclear issues:
Tightening of regulations (Sep 1997) 41814
US civil nuclear technology (Oct 1997) 41860
Obituaries:
Deng Xiaoping (Feb 1997) 41491–2
Peng Zhen (Apr 1997) 41589
Qin Jiwei (former defence minister) (Feb 1997) 41493
President Jiang Zemin:
Hong Kong handover ceremonies (Jul 1997) 41732
Meetings with
French President (May 1997) 41637
Russian President (Nov 1997) 41911–12
US President (Oct 1997) 41860
Report to 15th Congress of CCP (Sep 1997) 41813
Successor to Deng (Jan 1997) 41445; (Feb 1997) 41492
Taiwan question (Jul 1997) 41732
Visits to
Russia (Apr 1997) 41589
USA (Oct 1997) 41860

USA (contd)
Religious affairs: State Council white paper on religious freedom (Oct 1997) 41860
Resignations: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41741
Security:
see also Media; Xinjiang region
Arrests, Xinjiang bombing suspects (Apr 1997) 41589
Criminal code (Mar 1997) 41540
Explosions in Beijing (Mar 1997) 41541; (May 1997) 41638
Labour unrest (Jun 1997) 41690; (Sep 1997) 41814; (Oct 1997) 41860; (Dec 1997) 41960
National Defence Law (Mar 1997) 41540
Releases
Bao Tong (Apr 1997) 41589
Hong Kong journalist (Jan 1997) 41447
Uighur separatists (Mar 1997) 41541; (Apr 1997) 41589; (May 1997) 41638
Sichuan province: Labour unrest (Jun 1997) 41690; (Sep 1997) 41814
Snowstorms in Xinjiang region: (Jan 1997) 41446
Tibet: *see* TIBET
Trials: Shanghai securities chief (Feb 1997) 41493
UN: Veto of proposal to send observers to Guatemala (Jan 1997) 41441
World Petroleum Congress (WPC): (Oct 1997) 41893
Xinjiang region:
Executions (Apr 1997) 41589; (Aug 1997) 41771
Map (Feb 1997) 41493
Snowstorms (Jan 1997) 41446
Uighur separatists (Mar 1997) 41541; (Apr 1997) 41589; (May 1997) 41638
Unrest (Feb 1997) 41492–3; (Mar 1997) 41541; (Apr 1997) 41589; (Oct 1997) 41860

CIS *see* COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

CITES *see* ENVIRONMENT, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites)

COLOMBIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41440–1; (Feb 1997) 41487–8; (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41583; (May 1997) 41631; (Nov 1997) 41905
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41440–1; (Feb 1997) 41487; (Mar 1997) 41533; (May 1997) 41631
Constitution:
Constituent national assembly called for (Nov 1997) 41905
Constitutional Court decisions (Aug 1997) 41767; (Nov 1997) 41905
Extradition bill controversy (Apr 1997) 41583; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Nov 1997) 41905
Corruption:
see also Drug cartels
Ministers (Aug 1997) 41767
Samper administration (Mar 1997) 41533
Samper and Serpa drug cartel donations for 1994 election campaign allegations (Jan 1997) 41440; (Mar 1997) 41533; (May 1997) 41631; (Dec 1997) 41954
Defence:
Armed forces (Feb 1997) 41487; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Aug 1997) 41767
Commander of Armed Forces dismissed (Jul 1997) 41731
Minister (Jan 1997) 41440–1; (Feb 1997) 41487–8; (Mar 1997) 41533
Dismissals: Military (Jul 1997) 41731
Drug cartels:
Arrests
Elias (former Senate President) (Mar 1997) 41533
Peruvian drugs baron (Aug 1997) 41767
Bilateral agreement with USA (Aug 1997) 41767
Cali
Donations to 1994 presidential election campaign alleged (Jan 1997) 41440; (Mar 1997) 41533; (May 1997) 41631; (Dec 1997) 41954

COLOMBIA (contd)
Extradition question (Apr 1997) 41583; (Jun 1997) 41681
Lenient sentences for drug barons condemned (Jan 1997) 41440; (Mar 1997) 41533
Seizure of assets (Nov 1997) 41905
Constitutional Court decisions (Aug 1997) 41767
Crop eradication programme, Suspended (Mar 1997) 41533
Extradition law (Sep 1997) 41810; (Nov 1997) 41905; (Dec 1997) 41954
Government strategy (Apr 1997) 41583
US decertification (Mar 1997) 41533
Economy:
Bond issue (Feb 1997) 41488
Budget freeze (May 1997) 41631
Central Bank (Jan 1997) 41440
Collapse of international coffee and banana markets (Jan 1997) 41440
Oil industry (Feb 1997) 41487
Privatisation (Feb 1997) 41487
State of economic emergency (Jan 1997) 41440; (Feb 1997) 41487
Strike by dockworkers (Jan 1997) 41475
Trade unions (Feb 1997) 41487
Wage agreement (Feb 1997) 41487
Elections:
Local and regional
Guerrilla offensive to disrupt (Aug 1997) 41767; (Oct 1997) 41856
Results (Oct 1997) 41856
Presidential (1998), Candidates (May 1997) 41631; (Dec 1997) 41954
Energy: FARC attack on hydroelectric plant (Sep 1997) 41810
Foreign relations:
Panama (Apr 1997) 41583; (Jul 1997) 41732; (Nov 1997) 41904–5
USA
Bilateral agreement on drugs (Aug 1997) 41767
Carter intervention in hostage crisis (Jun 1997) 41681
Colombia Defence Minister appointment controversy (Jan 1997) 41440–1
Criticism of failure to reduce drug production (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41583
Human rights questions (Jul 1997) 41731; (Aug 1997) 41767
Human rights: (Jul 1997) 41731; (Aug 1997) 41767; (Nov 1997) 41905
Liberal Party (PL):
Congressman injured in bombing (Apr 1997) 41583
Elections (Oct 1997) 41856
Santos' peace plan (Oct 1997) 41856–7
National Liberation Army (ELN):
Attack on police post (Feb 1997) 41488
Bogotá car bomb (Jun 1997) 41681
Bomb attack on PL congressman (Apr 1997) 41583
Kidnapping and release of OAS observers (Oct 1997) 41856; (Nov 1997) 41905
Killing of PL senator (Aug 1997) 41767
Peace negotiations
ELN initiative (Nov 1997) 41905
Failure to respond (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41583; (Aug 1997) 41766
Suspension of regional elections demand rejected by Samper (Sep 1997) 41810
Obituary of former president Vargas: (May 1997) 41631
Organisation of American States (OAS):
Kidnapping and release of observers (Oct 1997) 41856; (Nov 1997) 41905
President:
Annual address to Congress (Jul 1997) 41731
Appointment of Defence Minister controversy (Jan 1997) 41440–1
Drug links, 1994 election campaign donations (Jan 1997) 41440; (Mar 1997) 41533; (May 1997) 41631; (Dec 1997) 41954
National Peace Commission initiative (Jul 1997) 41731
Peace efforts (Aug 1997) 41766–7; (Sep 1997) 41810

COLOMBIA (contd)
Rejection of peace proposal which required Samper to relinquish office (Oct 1997) 41856–7
State of economic emergency (Jan 1997) 41440; (Feb 1997) 41487
Refugees to Panama: (Jul 1997) 41732
Resignations:
Ministerial (May 1997) 41631; (Aug 1997) 41767
Prosecutor General (May 1997) 41631
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC):
Clashes with government forces (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41533–4; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Jul 1997) 41731
Government offensive against (Sep 1997) 41810
Hostages (government soldiers) (Feb 1997) 41488; (May 1997) 41631; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Dec 1997) 41953–4
Killings of police officers and soldiers (Oct 1997) 41857; (Nov 1997) 41905; (Dec 1997) 41953–4
Mass escape attempt from Valledupar prison (Apr 1997) 41583
Peace negotiations
Agreement to framework peace talks (Aug 1997) 41766–7
Disrupted by government offensive (Sep 1997) 41810
Failure to respond to peace talks proposal (Mar 1997) 41533
Open letter response to Santos' plan (Oct 1997) 41857
Security:
see also Drug cartels; National Liberation Army (ELN); Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)
Bomb attack on PL congressman (Apr 1997) 41583
Demilitarisation of Caguán jungle region (May 1997) 41631
Elections disrupted by guerrilla offensive (Aug 1997) 41767; (Oct 1997) 41856
Guerrilla clashes with military (Feb 1997) 41487–8; (Mar 1997) 41533–4; (Jul 1997) 41731
Jaime Bateman Cayón rebels (Dec 1997) 41954
Kidnappings
OAS observers (Oct 1997) 41856; (Nov 1997) 41905
Presidential press secretary and a radio reporter (Dec 1997) 41954
Killings
Mayoral and council candidates (Oct 1997) 41856; (Nov 1997) 41905
Peasants in Dabeiba (Nov 1997) 41905
Police officers (Oct 1997) 41857
Senator (Aug 1997) 41767
Soldiers (Nov 1997) 41905
Proposal to recognise guerrillas (Mar 1997) 41533
Right-wing paramilitaries blamed for massacre in Meta department (Jul 1997) 41731
Rural security organisations prohibited from taking part in armed conflicts (Nov 1997) 41905
Strikes (Jan 1997) 41475; (Feb 1997) 41487
Uraba crisis (Apr 1997) 41583; (Jun 1997) 41681
Senate: Extradition law (Sep 1997) 41810
Simon Bolivar National Guerrilla Co-ordinating Board (CNGSB): (Sep 1997) 41810
Social Conservative Party (PSC): (May 1997) 41631; (Oct 1997) 41856

COMMODITIES
Bananas: (Jan 1997) 41440
Coffee: (Jan 1997) 41440; 41475
Copper: (Feb 1997) 41478
Diamonds: (Oct 1997) 41880
Gold: Indonesia gold find hoax (May 1997) 41644; (Oct 1997) 41869
Sugar: Cuba (Jun 1997) 41682

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA) *see* AFRICA, East and Southern Africa

COMMONWEALTH
Fiji: Readmission (May 1997) 41645; (Sep 1997) 41825; (Oct 1997) 41892
Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM): (Oct 1997) 41892
Membership applications: (Oct 1997) 41892
Nigeria:
Commonwealth ministerial action group (CMAG) (Feb 1997) 41481; (Jul 1997) 41724
Continued suspension (Oct 1997) 41849
Sanctions (Oct 1997) 41892
Sierra Leone:
Coup condemned (May 1997) 41625
Suspended (Jul 1997) 41725; (Oct 1997) 41892

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Belarus: Dismissal of CIS affairs minister (May 1997) 41659
Defence: Southern borders (Mar 1997) 41542; (May 1997) 41635
Peacekeeping forces:
Abkhazia (Mar 1997) 41551; (Jun 1997) 41710; (Jul 1997) 41753; (Aug 1997) 41787; (Oct 1997) 41878
Tajikistan (Mar 1997) 41552; (May 1997) 41635
Russia: Yeltsin state of the nation address (Mar 1997) 41549
Summits: (Mar 1997) 41552; (Oct 1997) 41880–1

COMOROS
Anjouan:
Anjouan People's Movement (MPA) (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41762
Arab League mediation (Sep 1997) 41805
Government failure to regain control (Sep 1997) 41805
Negotiations with government (Dec 1997) 41948–9
Organisation of African Unity (OAU) mediation (Aug 1997) 41762–3; (Sep 1997) 41805; (Oct 1997) 41852; (Nov 1997) 41901
Referendum on self-determination (Sep 1997) 41805
Secessionist provisional government formed (Oct 1997) 41852
Separatists' demand for return to French rule (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41762–3
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41948
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41948
Foreign relations: France (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41762–3
President: Assumption of absolute power (Sep 1997) 41805
Security: Demonstrations and riots (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41762
State Transition Commission: (Sep 1997) 41805; (Dec 1997) 41948
Trials: Denard (charged with assassination of former President) (Jun 1997) 41674

CONGO
Appointments:
Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41801; (Nov 1997) 41896
Prime Minister (Sep 1997) 41800–1
Cabinet: (Sep 1997) 41801; (Nov 1997) 41896
Constitutional Court: Postponement of presidential poll (Jul 1997) 41723
Defence:
Armed forces
Abortive mutiny by army recruits (Feb 1997) 41480
Naval mutiny (Apr 1997) 41576
Democratic and Patriotic Front (FDP): (Jul 1997) 41723; (Nov 1997) 41896
Dismissals: Naval commander (Apr 1997) 41576
Economy: Budget (Jan 1997) 41435
Foreign relations:
Angola (Oct 1997) 41848
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre) (Aug 1997) 41759; (Oct 1997) 41848

CONGO (contd)
France (Jun 1997) 41671; (Aug 1997) 41759; (Nov 1997) 41896
Gabon (Aug 1997) 41759
Zaïre (May 1997) 41621
Foreign trade: France (Oct 1997) 41848
Movement for Democracy and Solidarity (MDS): (Nov 1997) 41896
Organisation of African Unity (OAU): (Aug 1997) 41759
President:
Lissouba
Dispute with former President Sassou-Nguesso (Jun 1997) 41671; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759
Overthrown by Sassou-Nguesso (Oct 1997) 41848
Suit against Elf in France whom he blamed for his overthrow (Nov 1997) 41896
Sassou-Nguesso, Seizure of power (Oct 1997) 41848
Prime Minister: Kolelas appointed (Sep 1997) 41800–1
Security:
Army mutiny failure (Feb 1997) 41480
Assassination attempt on Sassou-Nguesso (former president) (May 1997) 41624
Brazzaville, Fighting between rival militias (Jun 1997) 41671; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848
Evacuation of foreign nationals (Jun 1997) 41671
Looting in Pointe-Noire by Cobra militia and Angolan troops (Oct 1997) 41848
Naval mutiny (Apr 1997) 41576
Peace talks (Jul 1997) 41723; (Sep 1997) 41800–1
UN:
Call for Security Council to approve dispatch of international troops (Jun 1997) 41671
Joint OAU/UN mediation mission (Aug 1997) 41759

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF [FORMERLY ZAÏRE]
see also ZAÏRE
Appointments: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41669; (Aug 1997) 41759
Armed forces: Military discipline measures (Dec 1997) 49146–7
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41669; (Aug 1997) 41759
Constitutional commission: (Oct 1997) 41848
Economy:
Currency (Jun 1997) 41669
Reconstruction programme (Jun 1997) 41669
Elections promise: (Jun 1997) 41669
Foreign relations:
Belgium (Aug 1997) 41759
Burundi (Sep 1997) 41801
Congo (Aug 1997) 41759; (Oct 1997) 41848
France (Nov 1997) 41896; (Dec 1997) 41947
USA, Albright visit (Dec 1997) 41946
Francophonie group of countries: Withdrawal from (Nov 1997) 41941
Human rights:
Hutu massacre allegations (Jun 1997) 41669; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848
Mbandaka site abandoned by UN investigators (Dec 1997) 41946
Return of UN investigators (Nov 1997) 41896–7
Membership of Southern African Development Community (SADC): (Sep 1997) 41805
Mobutu:
Appeal to Swiss tribunal over freezing of assets rejected (Aug 1997) 41759
Death in Morocco (Sep 1997) 41800
Organisation of African Unity (OAU): (Aug 1997) 41759
President:
Government policy priorities (Jun 1997) 41669
Military discipline measures (Dec 1997) 49146–7
Refugees: Forced repatriation of Hutus to Rwanda (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848
Security:
Arrests

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF [FORMERLY ZAÏRE] (contd)
Nindanga (armed forces Chief of Staff) (Nov 1997) 41896
Tshisekedi (UDPS leader) (Jun 1997) 41669
Clashes between rival army factions (Nov 1997) 41896
Demonstrations and protests against UN investigators (Dec 1997) 41946
UN:
High Commissioner for Refugees
Activities suspended (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848
Return of investigators (Nov 1997) 41896–7
Inquiry into massacre allegations (Jun 1997) 41669; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848; (Nov 1997) 41896–7; (Dec 1997) 41946
Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS): Tshisekedi arrested (Jun 1997) 41669

COOK ISLANDS
Resignations: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41968
South Pacific Forum annual summit: (Sep 1997) 41825

CORSICA *see* FRANCE

COSTA RICA
Central American summit: (May 1997) 41634
Foreign relations: Taiwan (Jul 1997) 41738
Managua Declaration on regional political union: (Sep 1997) 41813

COTE D'IVOIRE
Constitution: (Aug 1997) 41760
Defence: Military exercises (Mar 1997) 41529
Foreign relations: France (Mar 1997) 41529; (Aug 1997) 41763
Ministries changes: (Dec 1997) 41950
National Assembly: New president elected (Aug 1997) 41760
Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC): (Dec 1997) 41985

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
Belarus: Observer status cancelled (Jan 1997) 41459
Belarus-Russia Union Treaty: (Jun 1997) 41709
Estonia: Monitoring to cease (Jan 1997) 41460
Human rights: (Oct 1997) 41887
Russia: Death penalty (Apr 1997) 41610
Strasbourg summit: (Oct 1997) 41887

CROATIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41834
Constitutional changes: (Nov 1997) 41932
Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ): Elections (Mar 1997) 41605; (Jun 1997) 41705
Croatian Social Liberal Parity (HSLS): (Dec 1997) 41979
Eastern Slavonia:
Delays in distributing citizenship papers (Feb 1997) 41504
Elections
Timetable (Mar 1997) 41555
Results (Apr 1997) 41605–6
Independent Democratic Serbian Party (SDSS) (Mar 1997) 41555
Memorandum on re-integration (Jan 1997) 41456
Resettlement of refugees (Jul 1997) 41749
UN
Aid (Jan 1997) 41456
Appointment of new administrator (Aug 1997) 41791
Transitional Administration extended (Jul 1997) 41749
Visit by President Tudjman (Jun 1997) 41705
Economy:
IMF credit (Mar 1997) 41555; (Oct 1997) 41874
World Bank loan postponed (Jul 1997) 41750
Elections:
Eastern Slavonia (Apr 1997) 41605–6
Postponed (Feb 1997) 41504
Timetable (Mar 1997) 41555

CROATIA (contd)
Local results (Apr 1997) 41605
Upper House results (Apr 1997) 41605
Presidential (Jun 1997) 41705
Foreign relations:
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Aug 1997) 41790; (Oct 1997) 41875
Israel (Aug 1997) 41796
Serbia, Rail link re-opened (Nov 1997) 41932
USA (Jul 1997) 41750; (Oct 1997) 41874
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (Sep 1997) 41834
Human rights: (Sep 1997) 41834
Map: (Apr 1997) 41605
Media:
Call to end government control of Croatian Radio and Television (HRT) (Nov 1997) 41932
Opposition radio station (Jan 1997) 41456; (Nov 1997) 41932
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): (Apr 1997) 41605; (Jun 1997) 41705
Ploce: Failure to reach agreement on Bosnian use of (Oct 1997) 41875
Political parties: (Apr 1997) 41605–6; (Jun 1997) 41705
President:
Eastern Slavonia visits (Jun 1997) 41705
Health speculation (Jan 1997) 41456; (Jun 1997) 41705
Re-election and inauguration of Tudjman (Jun 1997) 41705; (Aug 1997) 41791
War crimes allegations (Aug 1997) 41791
Refugees: Serbian (Jun 1997) 41705; (Jul 1997) 41749
Socialist Workers' Party of Croatia (SRPH): (Oct 1997) 41874
War crimes:
Bajramovic confession (Sep 1997) 41834
Croatian Serb suspect arrested (Jul 1997) 41749–50
Extradition of alleged war criminal to UN tribunal (Apr 1997) 41606
Paraga's request that Tudjman be indicted (Aug 1997) 41791
Surrender of Bosnian Croats (Aug 1997) 41791; (Oct 1997) 41874; 41874–5
Vitez police chief (Aug 1997) 41791

CUBA
Aid offer to: Montserrat (Aug 1997) 41769
Air crash: (Jul 1997) 41732
Appointments:
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41490; (Oct 1997) 41859
Politburo (Oct 1997) 41858–9
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41490
Che Guevara:
Remains returned from Bolivia (Jul 1997) 41731–3
Interment of remains (Oct 1997) 41859
Christmas Day holiday announcement: (Dec 1997) 41957
Communist Party (PCC):
Congress (Apr 1997) 41585; (Oct 1997) 41858–9
Politburo (Oct 1997) 41858–9
Dismissals: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41490
Economy:
Growth forecast (Apr 1997) 41585
Sugar harvest forecast (Jun 1997) 41682; (Oct 1997) 41859

US sanctions *see* Foreign relations, USA
Elections: Municipal (Oct 1997) 41859
Foreign relations:
Bolivia (Jul 1997) 41731–3
Canada (Jan 1997) 41442
European Union (EU) (Jan 1997) 41442; (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585; (Jun 1997) 41682
Japan (Mar 1997) 41533
Peru (Mar 1997) 41533
Russia (Jun 1997) 41682
South Africa (Jan 1997) 41430
Spain (Mar 1997) 41536
USA

US sanctions *see* Foreign relations, USA (contd)
Biological warfare accusations against USA (May 1997) 41634; (Aug 1997) 41769
Charges of US political interference (Jul 1997) 41731
Fly-past by anti-Castro Cuban exiles (Feb 1997) 41490
Helms-Burton Act
Canada (Apr 1997) 41581–2
Condemned by Rio Group (Aug 1997) 41768
EU/US talks (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585
Ibero-American summit (Nov 1997) 41907
Suspension of Title III provision (Jan 1997) 41442
Tightening of sanctions (Jun 1997) 41682
UN resolution condemning sanctions (Nov 1997) 41907
Media permits question (Feb 1997) 41490
Rejection of US financial assistance package (Jan 1997) 41442
Return of Cubans involved in hijackings (Oct 1997) 41859
Travel restrictions relaxed for Papal visit plans (Aug 1997) 41769
US elements blamed for terrorist bombing campaign (Sep 1997) 41812
WTO disputes panel to rule on EU case (Feb 1997) 41489–90; (Apr 1997) 41584
Foreign trade:
Canada (Apr 1997) 41581–2
CARICOM membership question (Jul 1997) 41731
South Africa (Apr 1997) 41585
Health: US sanctions effect on (Mar 1997) 41536
Human rights: (Jan 1997) 41442; (Apr 1997) 41585
May Day celebrations: (May 1997) 41633–4
Media: (Feb 1997) 41490
Obituary of exile leader: (Nov 1997) 41907
President:
Address to PCC 5th Congress (Oct 1997) 41858
Rejection of US financial aid offer (Jan 1997) 41442
Religious affairs: Papal visit plans (Aug 1997) 41769; (Dec 1997) 41957
Security:
Arrest of dissidents (Jul 1997) 41731
Arrested Cuban exiles linked to alleged plot to kill Castro (Nov 1997) 41907
Bomb attacks (Jul 1997) 41731; (Aug 1997) 41769; (Sep 1997) 41812
German tourist released after firecracker incident (Jul 1997) 41731
Tourism: (Sep 1997) 41812
Trials: US citizen imprisoned for plotting attacks on police and tourists (Nov 1997) 41907
UN:
Human rights vote (Apr 1997) 41585
Vote against US sanctions (Nov 1997) 41907

CYPRUS
Appointments: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41603; (Nov 1997) 41929
Arms deals with: Russia (Jan 1997) 41461; (Sep 1997) 41835
Cabinet: (Apr 1997) 41603; (Nov 1997) 41929
Defence:
Arms build-up feared by western governments (Jan 1997) 41461–2; (Sep 1997) 41835
War games Nikiforos with Greek armed forces (Oct 1997) 41877
Democratic Party (DIKO): Withdrawal from coalition government (Nov 1997) 41929
Foreign relations:
EU membership question (Jul 1997) 41745; 41746; (Aug 1997) 41789; (Dec 1997) 41968; 41972
UK (Jan 1997) 41461–2; (Apr 1997) 41603; (Sep 1997) 41835
USA (Jan 1997) 41461–2; (Jun 1997) 41701–2; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Oct 1997) 41877; (Nov 1997) 41929
Foreign trade: Russia (Jan 1997) 41461
Peace efforts:

CYPRUS (contd)
see also UN
European Union (EU) (Oct 1997) 41887
US efforts (Oct 1997) 41877; (Nov 1997) 41929
President:
Cabinet reshuffle (Apr 1997) 41603
Talks with TRNC President Denktash (Sep 1997) 41835
Resignations: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41929
Security: Attack on UK military base (Apr 1997) 41603
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC):
Arms build-up (Jan 1997) 41461–2; (Sep 1997) 41835
National Revival Party (UDP) (Nov 1997) 41929
Partial integration agreement with Turkey (Aug 1997) 41789
Suspension of talks over EU accession offer to Greek Cypriot regime (Dec 1997) 41972
Turkish military exercises (Nov 1997) 41929
UN:
Anxieties over arms build-up (Jan 1997) 41461
Direct talks (Jun 1997) 41702; (Jul 1997) 41746; (Aug 1997) 41788–9; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Nov 1997) 41929

CZECH REPUBLIC
Appointments:
Intelligence Service (Mar 1997) 41553
Ministerial (May 1997) 41656; (Jun 1997) 41706–7
Prime Minister (Dec 1997) 41977
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41706–7; (Dec 1997) 41977
Christian Democratic Union-Czech People's Party: Political crisis (Oct 1997) 41872; (Nov 1997) 41931; (Dec 1997) 41977
Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA): (Mar 1997) 41553; (Nov 1997) 41931; (Dec 1997) 41977
Civic Democratic Party (ODS):
Corporate donations controversy (Nov 1997) 41931
Criticised by President (May 1997) 41656
Political and economic crisis (Jun 1997) 41706–7; (Oct 1997) 41872
Withdrawal from governing coalition (Nov 1997) 41931; (Dec 1997) 41977
Corruption:
Banking (Apr 1997) 41607
Civic Democratic Party (ODS) (Nov 1997) 41931
Investment fund scandal (Mar 1997) 41553
Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD): (May 1997) 41656; (Jun 1997) 41707
Economy:
Application to European Union (EU) for floods aid (Sep 1997) 41831
Banking (Nov 1997) 41931
Budget (Apr 1997) 41607–8; (Jun 1997) 41707; (Oct 1997) 41873
Central bank (May 1997) 41656
Currency crisis (May 1997) 41656
Energy (Mar 1997) 41553
Privatisation (Jun 1997) 41705–6; (Nov 1997) 41931
Reconstruction following floods (Aug 1997) 41791–2; (Sep 1997) 41831
Taxation (Sep 1997) 41831
Foreign relations:
Germany (Jan 1997) 41461; (Mar 1997) 41553; (Apr 1997) 41607–8
Israel (Sep 1997) 41831
Jordan (Sep 1997) 41831
Lebanon (Sep 1997) 41831
Palestinians (Sep 1997) 41831
Slovakia (Apr 1997) 41607; (Oct 1997) 41872–3
Foreign trade:
Norway, Gas agreement (Mar 1997) 41553
Russia, Energy supplies (Mar 1997) 41553
NATO/EU membership ambitions: (Jul 1997) 41750; (Oct 1997) 41872; (Dec 1997) 41968
Patriotic Republican Party: (Mar 1997) 41553
President:
Address to German legislature (Apr 1997) 41608
Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Criticism of ODS-led government (May 1997) 41656

CZECH REPUBLIC (contd)
Havel's candidacy for second term (Jul 1997) 41750
Health (Jan 1997) 41461; (Nov 1997) 41931
Insults to Slovak Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41607
Visit to Middle East (Sep 1997) 41831
Prime Minister:
Meeting with Slovak Prime Minister (Oct 1997) 41762–3
Resignation of Klaus (Nov 1997) 41931
Tosovsky (Dec 1997) 41977
Racial issues:
Anti-racism marches (Nov 1997) 41931
Arrest of Patriotic Republican Party leader (Mar 1997) 41553
Killing of Sudanese student by neo-Nazis (Nov 1997) 41931
Resignations:
Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41607; (May 1997) 41656; (Oct 1997) 41872
Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41931
Security:
see also Racial issues
Intelligence Service (BIS) (Mar 1997) 41553
Storms and floods: (Jul 1997) 41750; (Aug 1997) 41791–2; (Sep 1997) 41831

D

DAMASCUS DECLARATION *see* ARAB STATES

DEATH PENALTY
Bangladesh: (Sep 1997) 41821
Burundi: (Aug 1997) 41762; (Sep 1997) 41801
Chad: (Jan 1997) 41433
China: (Feb 1997) 41493; (Apr 1997) 41589; (May 1997) 41638; (Aug 1997) 41771
Egypt: (Sep 1997) 41843; (Oct 1997) 41891
Georgia: Abolished (Feb 1997) 41509; (Nov 1997) 41922
India: (Nov 1997) 41914
Iran: (Sep 1997) 41843
Iraq: (Feb 1997) 41520; (Mar 1997) 41567; (Dec 1997) 41982
Korea, North: (Nov 1997) 41910–11
Libya: (Jan 1997) 41473–4
Mali: (Dec 1997) 41944
Palestine: (May 1997) 41662; (Jun 1997) 41714
Poland: Abolished (Mar 1997) 41553; (May 1997) 41750–1
Russia: (Apr 1997) 41610; (Sep 1997) 41837
Rwanda: (Jan 1997) 41431; (Feb 1997) 41477; (May 1997) 41622
Turkmenistan: (Jun 1997) 41694
USA:
Executions (Jun 1997) 41677
McVeigh (Oklahoma bomber) (Aug 1997) 41765
Vietnam: (Jan 1997) 41450–1; (May 1997) 41642; (Jul 1997) 41734; (Sep 1997) 41823

DEBT
Bulgaria: (Jan 1997) 41453
Guyana: (Apr 1997) 41586
Jordan: Agreement with USA over debt write-off (Sep 1997) 41841
Korea, South: (Nov 1997) 41909–10; (Dec 1997) 41958
London Club arrangements:
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Jul 1997) 41749
Macedonia (Mar 1997) 41556
Russia (Oct 1997) 41880
Vietnam (Jan 1997) 41451
Paris Club arrangements: Yemen (Dec 1997) 41981
South Africa: (Mar 1997) 41527
Venezuela: (Nov 1997) 41905
Vietnam (Nov 1997) 41916
Yemen: (Dec 1997) 41981

DENMARK
Appointments: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41882
Conservative People's Party: (Feb 1997) 41517
Economy:
Budget (Aug 1997) 41784
Taxation (May 1997) 41651

DENMARK (contd)
Elections: Local (Nov 1997) 41924
Environment: Taxation measures to help (May 1997) 41651
European Union (EU):
Multi-speed Europe question (Jan 1997) 41468
Referendum announcement (Oct 1997) 41882
Tobacco advertising ban (Dec 1997) 41968
Euthanasia: (Oct 1997) 41882
Foreign relations:
China (May 1997) 41589
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
USA (Jul 1997) 41757
Greenland:
Foreign relations, Norway (Nov 1997) 41924
Prime Minister (Sep 1997) 41830
Immigration policy: (Oct 1997) 41882
NATO: (Jul 1997) 41757
Resignations: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41882
Security: Letter bombing campaign foiled (Jan 1997) 41469
Social Democratic Party (SD): (Nov 1997) 41924
Trials:
Neo-Nazis jailed for letter-bomb plot (Sep 1997) 41830
Nurse to face murder charges (Oct 1997) 41882

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
Developing Eight (D-8) Group of Islamic countries: (Jun 1997) 41718; (Dec 1997) 41985
Group of 15 (G-15): Summit (Nov 1997) 41941
Group of 24 (G-24):
Finance and development ministers' meeting (Sep 1997) 41844
Spring meeting (Apr 1997) 41617

DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL
see also CHEMICAL WEAPONS, Chemical Weapons Convention; UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
Landmines:
Draft treaty adopted (Sep 1997) 41845
Nobel prize for International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) (Oct 1997) 41893
Treaty signed (Dec 1997) 41984
Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR):
USA-Korea, North talks (Jun 1997) 41689
Organisation of American States (OAS) resolutions: (Jun 1997) 41682–3
Russia:
President's statements (Dec 1997) 41974
Standing down of NATO-targeted Russian nuclear warheads (May 1997) 41665; (Dec 1997) 41974
Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START):
START III (Mar 1997) 41569; (Dec 1997) 41974
Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE): (May 1997) 41665

DISASTERS
see also AVIATION; DROUGHT AND FAMINE; EARTHQUAKES; ENVIRONMENT; NUCLEAR ENERGY; STORMS, CYCLONES AND FLOODS; VOLCANOES
Ecuador: Explosion at munitions depot (Jul 1997) 41731
Ferry and shipping disasters:
Burma (Mar 1997) 41545
Estonia (1994) report (Dec 1997) 41976
Haiti (Sep 1997) 41812
India (Sep 1997) 41820
Fires:
India (Feb 1997) 41500; (Jun 1997) 41691; (Sep 1997) 41820
Saudi Arabia, Haj (Apr 1997) 41616
Spain (Jul 1997) 41742
Thailand (Jul 1997) 41735
India:
Landslides (Jun 1997) 41691
School bus crash (Nov 1997) 41914
Japan: Mud avalanche (Jul 1997) 41736
Mine explosions:
Bulgaria (Sep 1997) 41832
China (Mar 1997) 41541; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Nov 1997) 41912
Russia (Dec 1997) 41975

DISASTERS (contd)
Oil spills: *see* ENVIRONMENT
Pakistan: Fatal gas leak in Lahore (Jan 1997) 41448
Peru: Mud slide (Feb 1997) 41488
Rail crashes:
India (Sep 1997) 41820
Iraq (Aug 1997) 41793
Pakistan (Mar 1997) 41543
Spain (Mar 1997) 41562
Romania: Explosion of "experimental" bomb (Jul 1997) 41754

DJIBOUTI
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41950
Armed forces:
Reduction in French troops (Dec 1997) 41950
Soldiers killed by Afar rebels (Sep 1997) 41806
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41950
Elections: (Dec 1997) 41950
Foreign relations: France (Aug 1997) 41763; (Dec 1997) 41950
Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD): (Sep 1997) 41806; (Dec 1997) 41950
Political parties: (Dec 1997) 41950

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
see also CARIBBEAN; CENTRAL AMERICA
Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD): (Apr 1997) 41586
Foreign relations:
Haiti (Feb 1997) 41490
Japan (Mar 1997) 41533
Peru (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41533
Spain (Aug 1997) 41783
Human rights: (Feb 1997) 41490
Security: Spanish ETA Basque separatists (Aug 1997) 41783

DROUGHT AND FAMINE
Ethiopia: (Mar 1997) 41526; (Aug 1997) 41763
Indonesia: (Oct 1997) 41869
Korea, North: (Feb 1997) 41495; (Mar 1997) 41539; (Apr 1997) 41593; (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Aug 1997) 41772; (Sep 1997) 41816–17; (Oct 1997) 41862; (Dec 1997) 41958–9
Papua New Guinea: (Sep 1997) 41825
Somalia: (Mar 1997) 41537
Tanzania: (Sep 1997) 41806

DRUGS
Afghanistan: (Nov 1997) 41913
Albania: (Jun 1997) 41703
Belgium: (Nov 1997) 41934; (Dec 1997) 41979
Bolivia: Coca eradication (Jun 1997) 41680
Burma-Philippines anti-trafficking agreement (Oct 1997) 41870
Central American summit: (May 1997) 41634
Colombia: *see* COLOMBIA, Drug cartels
Haiti: (Mar 1997) 41536
Italy: Mafia (Mar 1997) 41559
Jamaica: (May 1997) 41635
Lebanon: (Nov 1997) 41937–8
Mexico:
Anti-drugs agency (May 1997) 41631
Anti-laundering measures (Mar 1997) 41534–5
Arrests of Attorney General's anti-drug office staff (Sep 1997) 41809
Certification of Mexico controversy (Mar 1997) 41534
Death of Fuentes (drug baron) reported (Jul 1997) 41729
Drugs Agency chief arrested for being in pay of drug baron (Feb 1997) 41489
Salinas links alleged (Apr 1997) 41582
Trials of senior officials (Feb 1997) 41489
Netherlands: (Mar 1997) 41534
Pakistan:
Air force officer (Apr 1997) 41587
Bhutto family links alleged (Sep 1997) 41819
Russia: Arrest of Federal Security Service officials for trafficking (Feb 1997) 41507
St Kitts and Nevis: (Oct 1997) 41859
Surinam: (Mar 1997) 41534

DRUGS (contd)
Switzerland: (Sep 1997) 41831
Syria: (Nov 1997) 41937–8
Tajikistan: (Mar 1997) 41542
UK:
Appointment of "drugs tsar" (Oct 1997) 41886
MI6 role (Aug 1997) 41780–1
USA:
Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) (Feb 1997) 41489
Medical use of marijuana ruling (Apr 1997) 41580
Tobacco (Mar 1997) 41531; (Apr 1997) 41580–1; (May 1997) 41629; (Jun 1997) 41677; (Jul 1997) 41727; (Aug 1997) 41765
Vietnam: Death penalty for trafficking (May 1997) 41642; (Sep 1997) 41823

E

EARTHQUAKES
Bangladesh: (Nov 1997) 41915
Chile: (Oct 1997) 41858
India: (May 1997) 41637
Indonesia: (Sep 1997) 41824
Iran: (Feb 1997) 41520; (Mar 1997) 41567; (May 1997) 41661
Italy: (Sep 1997) 41829; (Oct 1997) 41883
Pakistan: (Mar 1997) 41543
Venezuela: (Jul 1997) 41729

EAST TIMOR *see* INDONESIA, East Timor

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION ORGANISATION (ECO), Summit: (May 1997) 41666

ECOWAS *see* AFRICA, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECUADOR
Appointments:
Attorney General (Jun 1997) 41681
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41486–7; (Mar 1997) 41570; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Aug 1997) 41766; (Nov 1997) 41907
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41486–7; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Nov 1997) 41907
Confederation of Indian Movements (Conaie): (Aug 1997) 41766
Constitution:
Constituent Assembly (Nov 1997) 41907; (Dec 1997) 41956
Crisis (Feb 1997) 41487; (May 1997) 41632; (Aug 1997) 41766
Reform (Sep 1997) 41812
Corruption:
Anti-corruption commission (Feb 1997) 41487
Bucaram (Apr 1997) 41583
Ecuadorian Roldosist Party (PRE) (Apr 1997) 41583
Defence: Munitions depot explosion disaster (Jul 1997) 41731
Dismissals: Supreme Court members (Jul 1997) 41731
Economy: Privatisation (Nov 1997) 41907
Ecuadorian Roldosist Party (PRE): (Apr 1997) 41583; (Dec 1997) 41956
Elections: Constituent Assembly (Nov 1997) 41907; (Dec 1997) 41956
Explosion near Quito: (Jul 1997) 41731
Foreign relations:
Panama (Apr 1997) 41583
Peru (May 1997) 41632; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Sep 1997) 41812; (Nov 1997) 41906–7
USA (Sep 1997) 41812
Foreign trade: USA (Sep 1997) 41812
Map: (Feb 1997) 41487
Political parties: (Feb 1997) 41486–7; (Dec 1997) 41956
President:
Alarcón appointed interim President (Feb 1997) 41486–7; (May 1997) 41632
Bucaram
Ousted (Feb 1997) 41487
Panama grants asylum (Apr 1997) 41583
Visit to USA (Sep 1997) 41812

ECUADOR (contd)
Referendum on appointment of interim President: (May 1997) 41632
Security: Demonstrations and strikes (Feb 1997) 41487; (Aug 1997) 41766
Supreme Court: Dismissed (Jul 1997) 41731

EGYPT
Appointments:
Gubernatorial (Jul 1997) 41755
Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41755
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41755
Death penalty: (Sep 1997) 41843; (Oct 1997) 41891
Economy:
Agriculture (Jul 1997) 41755
Banking (Mar 1997) 41568
Minister (Jul 1997) 41755
Privatisation (Jul 1997) 41755
Environment: Irrigation project (Jan 1997) 41474
Foreign relations:
Eritrea (Jun 1997) 41673
Israel (Feb 1997) 41518; (Aug 1997) 41794; (Sep 1997) 41841
see also Middle East peace process
Libya (Jan 1997) 41474
Middle East peace process (May 1997) 41662; (Jun 1997) 41713
Palestinians (Jan 1997) 41470; (Feb 1997) 41518
Sudan (Jun 1997) 41673
Syria, Middle East peace process (May 1997) 41662
UK (Nov 1997) 41935
USA (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Foreign trade: Israel (Mar 1997) 41566
Health: Ban on female circumcision upheld (Dec 1997) 41982–3
Islamic fundamentalists:
see also Trials
Gamaat-i-Islamiya (radical Islamists) (Mar 1997) 41567; (Sep 1997) 41843
Confusion over responsibility for Luxor killings (Nov 1997) 41934–5; (Dec 1997) 41982
Leaders call for halt to military operations (Jul 1997) 41755
Statement before police killings (Oct 1997) 41891
Muslim Brotherhood, Arrests (Apr 1997) 41616
President:
Criticism of security services over Luxor killings (Nov 1997) 41935
Meetings with
Arafat (Feb 1997) 41518
Israeli Prime Minister (Feb 1997) 41518
Prime Minister: Attack report (Feb 1997) 41520
Religious affairs:
see also Islamic fundamentalists
Alleged Satanic youths (Jan 1997) 41474; (Mar 1997) 41567
Islamic banks (Mar 1997) 41568
Resignations: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41935
Security:
Arrests, Muslim Brotherhood members (Apr 1997) 41616
Attack on Prime Minister (Feb 1997) 41520
Killings
By Islamic militants (Mar 1997) 41567
Police (Aug 1997) 41796; (Oct 1997) 41891
Tourist bus deaths (Sep 1997) 41843; (Nov 1997) 41934–5; (Dec 1997) 41982
Land riots (Jul 1997) 41755
State of emergency extended (Feb 1997) 41520
Trials:
Islamic suspects (Jul 1997) 41755; (Aug 1997) 41796; (Sep 1997) 41843
Tourist bus attackers (Oct 1997) 41891

EL SALVADOR
see also CENTRAL AMERICA
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41635
Elections: Results (Mar 1997) 41535
Environment: Appointment of minister (May 1997) 41635
Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN):

EL SALVADOR (contd)
Convention (Dec 1997) 41957
Election success (Mar 1997) 41535
Foreign relations: Taiwan (Jul 1997) 41738; (Sep 1997) 41814
Managua Declaration on regional political union: (Sep 1997) 41813
National Republican Alliance (ARENA):
Elections (Mar 1997) 41535
Political parties: (Mar 1997) 41535

EMIGRATION *see* IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION

ENVIRONMENT
see also NUCLEAR ENERGY; NUCLEAR TESTS; NUCLEAR WASTE; NUCLEAR WEAPONS; UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCED)
Australia: Bush fires (Dec 1997) 41967
Biodiversity convention: (Jun 1997) 41717
Brazil: Removal of gold prospectors and loggers in Matto Grosso (Jan 1997) 41439
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites): (Jun 1997) 41717
Denmark: (May 1997) 41651
El Nino weather phenomenon: (Sep 1997) 41823–4; 41825; (Oct 1997) 41856; 41857; 41869; (Dec 1997) 41967
El Salvador: Minister appointed (May 1997) 41635
Fisheries:
Canada (May 1997) 41630
European Union (EU) quotas (Apr 1997) 41603
Portugal (Jun 1997) 41698
Forests:
Cambodia, Logging report (Sep 1997) 41822
Fires, Indonesia (Sep 1997) 41823–4; (Oct 1997) 41869
Vietnam, Reforestation project (Dec 1997) 41961
Germany: (Jan 1997) 41468
Global warming:
Australia refusal to set target for cutting greenhouse emissions (Sep 1997) 41825
EU carbon dioxide emissions targets (Jun 1997) 41717
South Pacific Forum discussions (Sep 1997) 41825
Green parties:
France (Apr 1997) 41601
Germany (May 1997) 41651
Latvia (Feb 1997) 41510; (Aug 1997) 41785
Mexico (Jul 1997) 41728; (Aug 1997) 41766
USA (May 1997) 41630
International Whaling Commission (IWC):
Monaco conference (Oct 1997) 41892
Italy: (Jan 1997) 41468
Ivory trade: Cites rules relaxed (Jun 1997) 41717
Kyoto climate conference: (Dec 1997) 41984
Malaysia: Smog reports (Sep 1997) 41823–4; (Nov 1997) 41918
Oil spills: Japan (Jan 1997) 41475; (Jul 1997) 41736–7
Summit of the Eight industrialised countries communiqué: (Jun 1997) 41717
Water projects:
Bangladesh-India water sharing agreement (Jul 1997) 41739
China, Yangtze river dam project (Nov 1997) 41912
Egypt (Jan 1997) 41474
India-Nepal (Jun 1997) 41692
Slovakia-Hungary dispute (Mar 1997) 41553; (Sep 1997) 41831
Thailand, Bakun project deferred (Oct 1997) 41869

EQUATORIAL GUINEA
Foreign relations: Spain (Sep 1997) 41803
French declared an official language: (Sep 1997) 41803
Human rights: (Jul 1997) 41723
Opposition parties banned from forming coalitions prior to elections: (Dec 1997) 41950
President: Accused of failing to return country to civilian rule (Jul 1997) 41723

EQUATORIAL GUINEA (contd)
Progress Party:
Banned (Jun 1997) 41674–5
Dismissal of PP president Moto (Jul 1997) 41723
Security:
Detention of Moto (Jun 1997) 41675
Mass arrests reported (Jul 1997) 41723
Trials: Moto convicted in absentia (Aug 1997) 41760

ERITREA
Constitution: (May 1997) 41627
Defence: Armed forces, Defeat at hands of pro-Sudanese forces in border area (Jun 1997) 41674
Dismissals: Military (Jun 1997) 41674
Economy:
Bank of Eritrea (Jul 1997) 41725
New currency (Jul 1997) 41725
Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF): (Jun 1997) 41674
Foreign relations:
Egypt (Jun 1997) 41673
Sudan (Jan 1997) 41433; (Apr 1997) 41578; (May 1997) 41627; (Jun 1997) 41673–4; (Jul 1997) 41720
People's Front for Democracy and Justice: (Jun 1997) 41674
President: Sudan accused of assassination plot (Jun 1997) 41673; (Jul 1997) 41720
Refugees: Repatriation (May 1997) 41627
Security: Protest to UN over Sudanese activities (Jul 1997) 41720
UN:
High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officials expelled (May 1997) 41627
Protest to Security Council over Sudanese activities (Jul 1997) 41720

ESTONIA
see also BALTIC STATES
Abolition of European Affairs ministry: (May 1997) 41657
Appointments:
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41552; (May 1997) 41657
Prime Minister (Feb 1997) 41510; (Mar 1997) 41552
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41552
Citizenship: (May 1997) 41657
Coalition Party: (Feb 1997) 41510; (Apr 1997) 41608
Constitution: Language law amendment (Nov 1997) 41924
Corruption: Vahi (Prime Minister) (Feb 1997) 41510
Council of Europe: Monitoring to cease (Jan 1997) 41460
Defence: Armed forces, Drowning of soldiers during survival training exercise (Sep 1997) 41839; (Oct 1997) 41881
Disasters: Ferry disaster (1994) report (Dec 1997) 41976
Dismissals: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41608
Economy:
Budget (Nov 1997) 41924; (Dec 1997) 41976
Customs law approved (Oct 1997) 41881
IMF (Nov 1997) 41924; (Dec 1997) 41976
Merger of ministries rejected (Apr 1997) 41608
European Union (EU) membership question: (Oct 1997) 41881; (Dec 1997) 41968
Foreign relations:
Latvia, Border demarcation completed (Dec 1997) 41976
Russia, Refusal of Russia to sign border agreement (Jan 1997) 41459–60
Human rights: (Jan 1997) 41460; (Nov 1997) 41924
Prime Minister:
Resignation of Vahi (Feb 1997) 41510
Siimann appointed (Feb 1997) 41510; (Mar 1997) 41552
Reform Party: (Feb 1997) 41510
Release of political prisoner: (Nov 1997) 41924
Resignations:
Military (Sep 1997) 41839

ESTONIA (contd)
Prime Minister (Feb 1997) 41510
Soviet passports invalidated: (May 1997) 41657
World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership question: (Oct 1997) 41881

ETHIOPIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41482; (Jun 1997) 41674
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41482
Defection of football players: (Jan 1997) 41432
Dergue (former Mengistu regime): Charged with war crimes and genocide (Feb 1997) 41482–3
Dismissals: Executive council of Somali Regional Council (Oct 1997) 41852
Drought emergency: (Mar 1997) 41526; (Aug 1997) 41763
Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL): (Dec 1997) 41950
Foreign relations:
Burundi (Sep 1997) 41801
Italy (Dec 1997) 41949
Somalia (Jan 1997) 41432
Sudan (Jan 1997) 41433
USA (Dec 1997) 41949–50
Mengistu (former head of state): Charged with war crimes and genocide (Feb 1997) 41482–3
Obituary of Asfa Wossen (son of Haile Selassie): (Jan 1997) 41432
Ogaden National Liberation Front: (Oct 1997) 41852
Oromo Liberation Front: (Oct 1997) 41852
Refugees from drought in Somalia and Kenya: (Mar 1997) 41526; (Jun 1997) 41674
Refugees return from Sudan: (Jun 1997) 41674
Security:
Bombings
Addis Ababa (Apr 1997) 41578
Hotel in Harar (Feb 1997) 41483
Killing of alleged Oromo rebels (Oct 1997) 41852
Somali Regional Council: (Oct 1997) 41852
War crimes: Italian apology (Dec 1997) 41949

EUROPE
see also ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM); BALTIC STATES; BLACK SEA ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (BSEC); COUNCIL OF EUROPE; EUROPEAN headings;; ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE); WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION (WEU)
Central and Eastern European presidents' summit: (Sep 1997) 41839
Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA): Romania (Apr 1997) 41607
Central European presidents' summit: (Jun 1997) 41711
Map: (May 1997) 41665
South-eastern European countries: Crete summit (Nov 1997) 41934

EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (EBRD)
Albania: (Apr 1997) 41597
Bulgaria: (May 1997) 41653
Ukraine: Chernobyl closure study (Feb 1997) 41509

EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
Election of Russian as member: (Apr 1997) 41609
Single court to be established in 1998: (Oct 1997) 41887
Turkey: Ruling on detention of Kurdish Democracy Party (DEP) deputies (Nov 1997) 41930

EUROPEAN UNION (EU)
40th anniversary: (Mar 1997) 41564
Agenda 2000: (Jul 1997) 41745–6; (Oct 1997) 41887
Agriculture:
Beef (BSE) crisis (Feb 1997) 41516–17
Beef labelling (Mar 1997) 41564
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Jul 1997) 41745–6; (Oct 1997) 41887

EUROPEAN UNION (EU) (contd)
Dairy farming (Jan 1997) 41466; (Mar 1997) 41559
Aid to:
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Jun 1997) 41704–5
Bulgaria (Jan 1997) 41453
Czech Republic, Application for flood relief (Sep 1997) 41831
Guatemala (Jan 1997) 41441
Korea, North (May 1997) 41641
Poland (Jul 1997) 41750
Regional aid policies (Oct 1997) 41887
Tibet (frozen) (Dec 1997) 41961
Ukraine (Sep 1997) 41838
Yemen (Jun 1997) 41716
Amsterdam treaty: *see* Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)
Aviation: Accord with Boeing (Jul 1997) 41746
Budget contributions:
Divisions over (Sep 1997) 41830–1
Germany's call for reduced contributions (Aug 1997) 41784
Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs: Zaïre refugee camps (Feb 1997) 41477
Court of Justice (ECJ):
French government criticised over failure to intervene in strikes (Dec 1997) 41968
Recruitment of women ruling (Nov 1997) 41929
Sweden liquor monopoly ruling (Mar 1997) 41563
Cyprus policy: (Oct 1997) 41887
Defence: (Mar 1997) 41564; (Jun 1997) 41700; (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Denmark: Referendum on Amsterdam treaty (Oct 1997) 41882
Enlargement strategy: (Oct 1997) 41887
Environment:
see also Fishing quotas
Carbon dioxide emissions (Jun 1997) 41717
Fining of Italy and Germany (Jan 1997) 41468
European Commission:
see also Agenda 2000:
Economic forecast (Oct 1997) 41887
President, UK general election (Apr 1997) 41600
Secretary General, Appointment of Trojan (May 1997) 41651
Taxation coordination (Sep 1997) 41830–1
European Monetary Union (EMU):
Efforts to meet convergence criteria
Belgium (Jan 1997) 41466; (Feb 1997) 41515
Finland (Sep 1997) 41830
France (Apr 1997) 41601; (May 1997) 41649; (Jun 1997) 41695; (Jul 1997) 41742; (Sep 1997) 41828
Germany (Feb 1997) 41512; (Mar 1997) 41559–60; (May 1997) 41650; (Jun 1997) 41696–7; (Jul 1997) 41743; (Nov 1997) 41927
Greece (Jan 1997) 41462; (Apr 1997) 41599; (Oct 1997) 41887; (Nov 1997) 41928
Italy (Jan 1997) 41466; (Feb 1997) 41512–13; (Mar 1997) 41559; (Apr 1997) 41598; (May 1997) 41650; (Sep 1997) 41828; (Oct 1997) 41883; (Nov 1997) 41928
Spain (Apr 1997) 41602; (May 1997) 41649
UK position (Jan 1997) 41467; (Oct 1997) 41885; (Nov 1997) 41925
Euro forum (E-X) plans (Nov 1997) 41929
Franco-German summit (Aug 1997) 41784
Interest rate rises (Oct 1997) 41887
Outline timetable agreement (Apr 1997) 41602
Schedule for currency merger (Sep 1997) 41830
Sweden, Decision not to participate in single currency or exchange rate mechanism (Oct 1997) 41882
European Parliament:
Beef (BSE) crisis debate (Feb 1997) 41516–17
Election of Speaker (Jan 1997) 41469
Finance ministers' meetings: (Sep 1997) 41830–1; (Nov 1997) 41929
Fishing quotas: (Apr 1997) 41603
Foreign ministers' meetings: (Jan 1997) 41468; (Mar 1997) 41564; (Oct 1997) 41887
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41558
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Feb 1997) 41501; 41502–3; (Nov 1997) 41919
Belarus (Jan 1997) 41459
Bulgaria (Jan 1997) 41453
Burma (Feb 1997) 41501; (Nov 1997) 41919
China (May 1997) 41589
Cuba (Jan 1997) 41442; (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585; (Jun 1997) 41682
Iran (Apr 1997) 41612–13; (Jun 1997) 41716; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Sep 1997) 41843; (Nov 1997) 41939
Israel (Aug 1997) 41794
Korea, North (May 1997) 41641
Mexico (Mar 1997) 41535; (Dec 1997) 41953
Middle East peace process (Feb 1997) 41519
Slovenia (May 1997) 41655; (Jul 1997) 41750
Somalia (Nov 1997) 41900
South American Common Market (Mercosur) (Jun 1997) 41683
Switzerland (Jun 1997) 41701
Tibet (Dec 1997) 41961
Ukraine (Sep 1997) 418378
USA
Banana imports (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41683
Boeing merger with McDonnell Douglas (Jul 1997) 41746
Burma sanctions dispute (Feb 1997) 41501
Cuba Helms-Burton Act sanctions dispute (Jan 1997) 41442; (Feb 1997) 41489–90; (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585; (Jun 1997) 41682; (Sep 1997) 41842; (Oct 1997) 41887
D'Amato Law on Iran sanctions (Sep 1997) 41842
EU-US summit (May 1997) 41651
Yemen (Jun 1997) 41716
Zaïre (Apr 1997) 41473
Foreign trade:
Burma (Feb 1997) 41501
Caribbean (Feb 1997) 41490–1; (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41683
Iran (Sep 1997) 41843; (Nov 1997) 41939
Latvia (Mar 1997) 41552
Montserrat (Jan 1997) 41469
Netherlands Antilles (Jan 1997) 41469
Turks and Caicos Islands (Jan 1997) 41469
USA, Product safety accord (May 1997) 41651
Vietnam (Nov 1997) 41916
Health issues: Tobacco advertisement ban agreement (Dec 1997) 41968
Intergovernmental Conference (IGC):
Agricultural policy (Feb 1997) 41517
Amsterdam treaty (Jun 1997) 41700–1; (Oct 1997) 41882
Draft treaty text (Mar 1997) 41564
Policy-making structure (Jan 1997) 41468; (Feb 1997) 41517
Pre-Amsterdam negotiations (May 1997) 41651
Lorry drivers' dispute over working week: (Jun 1997) 41701
Membership questions:
Bulgaria (Apr 1997) 41604; (Oct 1997) 41876; (Dec 1997) 41968
Cyprus (Jul 1997) 41745; 41746; (Aug 1997) 41789; (Dec 1997) 41968
Czech Republic (Jul 1997) 41750; (Dec 1997) 41968
Estonia (Oct 1997) 41881; (Dec 1997) 41968
Former communist countries (Jul 1997) 41745
Hungary (May 1997) 41655; (Dec 1997) 41968
Latvia (Dec 1997) 41968
Lithuania (Oct 1997) 41881; (Dec 1997) 41968
Poland (Dec 1997) 41968
Romania (Oct 1997) 41874; 41876; (Dec 1997) 41968
Slovakia (Jul 1997) 41750; (Oct 1997) 41873; (Dec 1997) 41968
Slovenia (Jul 1997) 41750; (Dec 1997) 41968
Turkey (Apr 1997) 41604; (Oct 1997) 41876; 41887; (Dec 1997) 41968; 41973
Part-time workers' rights: (Jun 1997) 41701
Renault job losses: (Mar 1997) 41563–4; (Apr 1997) 41602–3
Rice quotas: (Jan 1997) 41469
Schengen Convention:
Agreement on implementation (Jul 1997) 41746
Greece (Jun 1997) 41701
Scientific research: (Feb 1997) 41522
Summits:
Amsterdam (Jun 1997) 41700–1
"Jobs" (Nov 1997) 41928
Luxembourg (Nov 1997) 41928; (Dec 1997) 41968
Unemployment: (Mar 1997) 41563–4
World Trade Organisation (WTO):
Banana imports ruling (May 1997) 41635; 41651; (Jun 1997) 41683; 41701; (Sep 1997) 41831
USA/EU dispute over Cuba sanctions (Feb 1997) 41489–90; (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585; (Jun 1997) 41682; (Oct 1997) 41887

EUTHANASIA
Australia: (Jan 1997) 41452; (Mar 1997) 41548
Denmark: (Oct 1997) 41882

USA:
Oregon (Feb 1997) 41486; (Oct 1997) 41854; (Nov 1997) 41902–3
Supreme Court hearings (Jan 1997) 41437; (Jun 1997) 41677

F

FALKLAND (MALVINAS) ISLANDS
Argentine/UK relations: Fisheries negotiations (Jan 1997) 41440
Sovereignty issue:
Argentine President's communiqué (Jan 1997) 41440
Ibero-American summit (Nov 1997) 41907
UN: Decolonisation Committee resolution (Jun 1997) 41680
Visit of relatives of Argentinian soldiers killed in 1982 war: (Jan 1997) 41440

FIJI
see also PACIFIC REGIONS
Appointments: Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41779
Cabinet: (Aug 1997) 41779
Commonwealth readmission: (May 1997) 41645; (Sep 1997) 41825; (Oct 1997) 41892
Constitution: (May 1997) 41645; (Jun 1997) 41687; (Jul 1997) 41741; (Aug 1997) 41779; (Sep 1997) 41825
Economy: Difficulties (Nov 1997) 41920
Fijian Association Party (FAP): (Aug 1997) 41779; (Nov 1997) 41920
Fijian Political Party (SVT): (Nov 1997) 41920
Foreign relations:
Australia (Sep 1997) 41825
India (Sep 1997) 41825
Malaysia (Sep 1997) 41825
New Zealand (Sep 1997) 41825
UK (Sep 1997) 41825
National Federation Party (NFP): (Jun 1997) 41687
Racial issues: (Jul 1997) 41741; (Aug 1997) 41779
Spearhead Group summit: (May 1997) 41645–6

FINLAND
Appointments: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41887
Economy: Budget (Sep 1997) 41830
European Union (EU):
Liquor monopoly ruling (Mar 1997) 41563
Single currency plans (Sep 1997) 41830
Foreign relations: Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578

FIRES *see* DISASTERS

FLOODS *see* STORMS, CYCLONES AND FLOODS

FRANC ZONE: *see* AFRICA

FRANCE
Anti-semitism: (Nov 1997) 41927
Appointments:

FRANCE (contd)
Employers' federation leader (Dec 1997) 41971
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41695
Arms deals with:
Korea, South (Oct 1997) 41863
United Arab Emirates (Dec 1997) 41980
Aviation: Air France (Sep 1997) 41828
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41695
Communist Party:
Cabinet ministers (Jun 1997) 41695
Death of Marchais (Nov 1997) 41927
Election campaign (Apr 1997) 41601; (May 1997) 41649
Support for anti-FN demonstrations (Mar 1997) 41560
Corruption:
Bouygues and TF1 chiefs questioned (Feb 1997) 41514
Crédit Lyonnais investigation (May 1997) 41649
Paris mayor investigation (Mar 1997) 41561
Socialist Party (PS) (Jun 1997) 41696
Tapie, Failure of appeal (Feb 1997) 41514
Corsica:
Arrests of Corsican nationalists (Jan 1997) 41463
Bombings (Feb 1997) 41514; (Apr 1997) 41602
Front for the National Liberation of Corsica (FLNC) (Jan 1997) 41463
Front for the National Liberation of Corsica-Historic Wing (FLNC-Canal Historique): (Feb 1997) 41514; (Apr 1997) 41602
Council of Europe: Russia-France-Germany annual summits planned (Oct 1997) 41887
Defence:
Armed forces
Djibouti troop reductions (Dec 1997) 41950
Withdrawal from Central African Republic (CAR) (Oct 1997) 41848–9; (Dec 1997) 41950
Bases in Africa (Aug 1997) 41763
Electronics company rejection of GEC bid (Apr 1997) 41601
NATO
Failure to return to integrated military command (Jul 1997) 41757
Re-entry (Feb 1997) 41521; (Jul 1997) 41742
Partial privatisation of defence contractor (Sep 1997) 41828
Reduction in military presence in Africa (Aug 1997) 41763
Dismissals: Var prefect (Jun 1997) 41696
Economy:
Austerity measures (May 1997) 41649; (Jun 1997) 41695; (Jul 1997) 41742
Banking (Jan 1997) 41464
Budget (1998) (Sep 1997) 41828
Budget deficit (Apr 1997) 41601
Employers' federation (Oct 1997) 41884; (Dec 1997) 41971
Employment creation programme (Aug 1997) 41782; (Sep 1997) 41828
Privatisation (Sep 1997) 41828
Renault job losses (Mar 1997) 41563–4; (Apr 1997) 41602–3; (Jun 1997) 41695; 41701
Trade unions (Jan 1997) 41463–4; (Mar 1997) 41563–4; (Apr 1997) 41601; (May 1997) 41649; (Jun 1997) 41695; (Oct 1997) 41884; (Nov 1997) 41926–7
Transport (Jan 1997) 41463–4; (Nov 1997) 41926–7
Unemployment (Aug 1997) 41782; (Oct 1997) 41884; (Dec 1997) 41971
Working hours (Oct 1997) 41884
Elections:
General
Called (Apr 1997) 41601
Campaign (May 1997) 41649
Results (Jun 1997) 41694–5
Mayoral, Vitrolles (Feb 1997) 41514
Espionage: Atomic scientist convicted of treason (Oct 1997) 41884
European Union (EU):
Amsterdam summit (Jun 1997) 41701
Court of Justice (ECJ) criticism over strikes (Dec 1997) 41968

FRANCE (contd)
Euro forum (E-X) plans (Nov 1997) 41929
Fishing quotas (Apr 1997) 41603
Franco-German summit (Aug 1997) 41784
Multi-speed Europe question (Jan 1997) 41468
Renault job losses (Mar 1997) 41563–4
Single currency (Apr 1997) 41601; (May 1997) 41649; (Jun 1997) 41695; 41701; (Jul 1997) 41742; (Sep 1997) 41828
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (Mar 1997) 41543
African policy (Dec 1997) 41971
Albania (Mar 1997) 41558
Algeria, Algerian nationals sentenced (Feb 1997) 41514
Austria (Jul 1997) 41754
Belgium (Jun 1997) 41696
Burkina Faso (Mar 1997) 41529
Cameroon (Aug 1997) 41763
Central African Republic (CAR) (Jan 1997) 41430–1; (Apr 1997) 41576; (Aug 1997) 41763; (Dec 1997) 41950
Chad (Aug 1997) 41763
China (Jan 1997) 41445; (May 1997) 41637
Comoros (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41762–3
Congo (Jun 1997) 41671; (Aug 1997) 41759; (Nov 1997) 41896
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre) (Nov 1997) 41896; (Dec 1997) 41947
Côte d'Ivoire (Mar 1997) 41529; (Aug 1997) 41763
Djibouti (Aug 1997) 41763; (Dec 1997) 41950
Gabon (Aug 1997) 41763
Germany (Nov 1997) 41931
Malaysia (Nov 1997) 41917
Poland (Nov 1997) 41931
Rwanda (Aug 1997) 41763; (Nov 1997) 41897
Senegal (Aug 1997) 41763
Sierra Leone (May 1997) 41626
Spain (Jan 1997) 41463; (May 1997) 41649
USA (Sep 1997) 41842
Vietnam (Nov 1997) 41916
Zaïre (Jan 1997) 41431; (May 1997) 41622; (Aug 1997) 41763
Foreign trade:
Congo (Oct 1997) 41848
Iran (Sep 1997) 41842
Korea, South (Oct 1997) 41863
Peru (Aug 1997) 41768
UK (Apr 1997) 41601
United Arab Emirates (Dec 1997) 41980
Green party: (Apr 1997) 41601
Health: Doctors' strikes (Apr 1997) 41602
Human rights: (Mar 1997) 41561
Immigration and emigration:
Amendments to immigration laws (Dec 1997) 41971
Lille hunger strike by immigrants ended (Mar 1997) 41561
Opposition to proposed legislation on foreign visitors (Feb 1997) 41514
Policy announcements (Aug 1997) 41782–3; (Dec 1997) 41971
Review of legislation promised (Jun 1997) 41695
Judicial reform commission: (Jan 1997) 41463
Maps: (Mar 1997) 41561; (Jun 1997) 41695
National Front (FN):
Congress (Mar 1997) 41560
Election campaign (Apr 1997) 41601
Election results (Jun 1997) 41694
Le Pen
Conviction under anti-racism laws (Dec 1997) 41971
Libel victory (Nov 1997) 41927
Mayoral election victory in Vitrolles (Feb 1997) 41514
Toulon theatre director dismissed (Feb 1997) 41514
Var prefect dismissed by government (Jun 1997) 41696
New Caledonia: *see* NEW CALEDONIA
Nuclear issues: Closure of Super-Phénix reactor promised (Jun 1997) 41695
Obituaries:
Foccart (Mar 1997) 41561
Frey (Sep 1997) 41828

FRANCE (contd)
Giraud (Jul 1997) 41743
Marchais (former Communist leader) (Nov 1997) 41927
Paris: Mayor under investigation (Mar 1997) 41561
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41694–5
President:
General elections (Jun 1997) 41694–5
Judicial reform commission announced (Jan 1997) 41463
Papal visit (Aug 1997) 41783
Resentment of "interference" of EU in immigration laws (Feb 1997) 41514
Tensions with Jospin (Jul 1997) 41742–3
Visits to
China (May 1997) 41637
Malaysia (Nov 1997) 41917
Vietnam (Nov 1997) 41916
Warning over employment creation programme (Aug 1997) 41782
Prime Minister:
Jospin's policy initiatives (Jun 1997) 41695
Meeting with German Chancellor (Aug 1997) 41784
Visit to Africa (Dec 1997) 41971
Racial issues:
see also Immigration and emigration; National Front
Dismissal of Var prefect (Jun 1997) 41696
Le Pen conviction (Dec 1997) 41971
Movement Against Racism and for Friendship Between Peoples (MRAP) (Aug 1997) 41783
Radical Party: (Apr 1997) 41601
Rally for the Republic (RPR):
Change of name to Le Rassemblement (Dec 1997) 41971
Chirac-Jospin tensions (Jul 1997) 41742–3
Election campaign (Apr 1997) 41601; (May 1997) 41649
Election defeat (Jun 1997) 41694–5
Resignation of Juppé as leader (Jun 1997) 41695–6
Séguin elected leader (Jul 1997) 41743
Vitrolles mayoral elections (Feb 1997) 41514
Religious affairs:
Catholic Church
Papal visit (Aug 1997) 41783
Repentance for wartime role (Sep 1997) 41828
Resignations:
Employers' federation leader (Oct 1997) 41884
Juppé as leader of RPR (Jun 1997) 41695–6
Security:
see also Corsica
Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) (Nov 1997) 41927
Archives relating to 1961 killing of Algerians opened (Oct 1997) 41884
Arrests
Corsican nationalists (Jan 1997) 41463
ETA members (Jan 1997) 41463
Islamists (Jan 1997) 41463
Banking protest (Jan 1997) 41464
Demonstrations at National Front congress (Mar 1997) 41560
Killings by police (Dec 1997) 41971
Lorry drivers' dispute (May 1997) 41649; (Nov 1997) 41926–7
Paedophile arrests (Mar 1997) 41561; (Jun 1997) 41696
Phone-tapping scandal (Apr 1997) 41601
Precautions against Islamist violence (Jan 1997) 41463
Spanish ETA Basque separatists (Aug 1997) 41783
Transport strikes (Jan 1997) 41463–4; (Apr 1997) 41602
Urban unrest (Dec 1997) 41971
Socialist Party (PS):
Coalition difficulties over nationality laws amendments (Dec 1997) 41971
Conviction of Emmanuelli (former leader) (Jun 1997) 41696
Election campaign (Apr 1997) 41601; (May 1997) 41649

FRANCE (contd)
Election victory (Jun 1997) 41694–5
Jospin-Chirac tensions (Jul 1997) 41742–3
Support for anti-FN demonstrations (Mar 1997) 41560
Vitrolles mayoral elections (Feb 1997) 41514
Transport: *see* Economy
Trials:
see also Corruption
Algerian nationals (Feb 1997) 41514
Atomic scientist treason trial (Oct 1997) 41884
"Carlos the Jackal" (Dec 1997) 41971
Emmanuelli (former PS leader) (Jun 1997) 41696
Islamists (Jan 1997) 41463; (Nov 1997) 41927
Le Pen
Convicted of violating anti-racism laws (Dec 1997) 41971
Libel victory (Nov 1997) 41927
Tiberi proceedings dismissed (Jul 1997) 41743
Union for French Democracy (UDF): (May 1997) 41649; (Jun 1997) 41694; (Jul 1997) 41743
War crimes:
Commission to trace Jewish assets (Jan 1997) 41463; (Mar 1997) 41561
Nazi gold conference in London (Dec 1997) 41984
Papon (Jan 1997) 41475; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Oct 1997) 41884; 41893

FRANCOPHONIE, Seventh summit: (Nov 1997) 41940–1

FTAA *see* AMERICAS, Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA)

G

GABON
Appointments:
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41480
Vice President (Jun 1997) 41671
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41480
Democratic and Republican Alliance (ADR): (Jun 1997) 41671
Elections: Legislative (Jan 1997) 41434–5
Foreign relations:
Congo (Aug 1997) 41759
France (Aug 1997) 41763
Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG): (Jan 1997) 41434–5; (Feb 1997) 41480
High Council of the Resistance (HCR) opposition coalition: (Jun 1997) 41671
National Rally of Woodcutters (RNB): (Jan 1997) 41435
Political parties: (Jan 1997) 41434–5
Prime Minister: Obame-Nguema re-appointed (Jan 1997) 41435

GAMBIA
Appointments:
Gubernatorial (Apr 1997) 41579
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41529
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41529
Constitution: (Mar 1997) 41529
Elections: Legislative (Jan 1997) 41434
Foreign relations: Senegal (Sep 1997) 41803
Patriotic Alliance for Reorientation and Construction (PARC): (Jan 1997) 41434
Political parties: (Jan 1997) 41434
President:
Civilian regional governors appointed (Apr 1997) 41579
Vice-President appointment (Mar 1997) 41529
Refugees from Senegal: (Sep 1997) 41803
United Democratic Party: (Jan 1997) 41434

GCC *see* GULF CO-OPERATION COUNCIL

GEORGIA
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Abkhazia:
Appointments, Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41611
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force (Mar 1997) 41551; (Jun 1997) 41710; (Jul 1997) 41753; (Aug 1997) 41787; (Oct 1997) 41878
Deaths of police report denied by Abkhaz sources (Nov 1997) 41922
Demonstrations by ethnic Georgians who had fled Abkhazia (Mar 1997) 41551
Georgia-Abkhaz talks (Jun 1997) 41710; (Aug 1997) 41787; (Sep 1997) 41836; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41611
UN-sponsored talks with Georgian government (Jul 1997) 41753; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41660
Death penalty abolished: (Feb 1997) 41509; (Nov 1997) 41922
Economy:
Budget (Dec 1997) 41974
Energy supplies (Dec 1997) 41973–4
World Bank (Sep 1997) 41836
Foreign relations:
Armenia (May 1997) 41661
Russia
Abkhazia peace plan (Aug 1997) 41787
Border dispute (Dec 1997) 41973
Foreign trade: Russia, Gas pipeline agreement (Dec 1997) 41973–4
Front for the Reinstatement of Legitimate Power in Georgia party: (Mar 1997) 41551
Media: (Jul 1997) 41754
President:
1996 assassination plot thwarted (Feb 1997) 41509
Appointments of new ministers procedural irregularities (May 1997) 41660
Meeting with South Ossetia leader (Nov 1997) 41922
Visit to Armenia (May 1997) 41661
Resignations: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41611; (Jul 1997) 41754
Security:
Plot to assassinate President in 1996 revealed (Feb 1997) 41509
State Security Minister (Jul 1997) 41754
South Ossetia:
Agreement with Georgia President over return of displaced people (Nov 1997) 41922
Peacekeeping force (Mar 1997) 41551

GERMANY
Appointments: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41927
Berlin: Chancellery building (Feb 1997) 41512
Chancellor:
Amsterdam EU summit (Jun 1997) 41700–1
Cabinet reshuffle ruled out (Aug 1997) 41781–2
Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Economic and monetary union (EMU) convergence anxieties (Feb 1997) 41512
Holiday disrupted (Aug 1997) 41781–2
Inauguration of new chancellery building (Feb 1997) 41512
Kohl's decision to seek re-election (Apr 1997) 41598–9; (Oct 1997) 41882
Meetings with
French Prime Minister (Aug 1997) 41784
Russian President (Apr 1997) 41610; 41617
Support for Waigel (Jun 1997) 41696
Visit to Czech Republic (Mar 1997) 41553
Christian Democratic Union (CDU):
Congress (Oct 1997) 41882
Hamburg elections (Sep 1997) 41829
Kohl's decision to seek re-election (Apr 1997) 41598–9; (Oct 1997) 41882
Schauble named by Kohl as desired successor (Oct 1997) 41882
Tax reform tensions (Jan 1997) 41464; (Feb 1997) 41512
Christian Social Union (CSU):
Kohl's decision to seek re-election (Apr 1997) 41598–9
Tax reform tensions (Jan 1997) 41464
Waigel's calls for Cabinet reshuffle (Aug 1997) 41781–2
Corruption:
Röller (Dresdner Bank chief) (Sep 1997) 41829
Schneider (property developer) (Dec 1997) 41972
Council of Europe: Russia-France-Germany annual summits planned (Oct 1997) 41887
Defence:
Armed forces, Neo-Nazi links allegations (Dec 1997) 41971–2
Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
NATO (Apr 1997) 41617
Eastern states:
Funding programme agreed (Sep 1997) 41829
Land expropriations ruling (Feb 1997) 41512
Economy:
see also European Union (EU)
Agriculture (Jan 1997) 41468–9; (Mar 1997) 41564
Banking (Sep 1997) 41829
Budget (Jun 1997) 41697; (Jul 1997) 41743
Bundesbank (May 1997) 41650–1; (Jun 1997) 41696
East Germany jobs plan (May 1997) 41651
Eastern states funding programme (Sep 1997) 41829; (Oct 1997) 41882
Emergency action to reduce deficit (Nov 1997) 41927
Finance Minister Waigel (Aug 1997) 41781–2
Gold reserves revaluation plan (May 1997) 41650–1; (Jun 1997) 41696–7
Privatisation (Jun 1997) 41697; (Aug 1997) 41781
Solidarity tax cut (Oct 1997) 41882
Tax reforms (Jan 1997) 41464; (Feb 1997) 41512; (Apr 1997) 41599; (Jul 1997) 41743; (Aug 1997) 41782; (Sep 1997) 41829; (Nov 1997) 41927; (Dec 1997) 41972
Unemployment (Feb 1997) 41512; (Mar 1997) 41559–60; (May 1997) 41651; (Nov 1997) 41927
Elections: Hamburg (Sep 1997) 41829
Espionage: US envoy expelled (Mar 1997) 41560
European Union (EU):
Amsterdam summit (Jun 1997) 41700–1
Cattle cull (Jan 1997) 41468–9; (Mar 1997) 41564
Convergence difficulties (Feb 1997) 41512; (Mar 1997) 41559–60; (Apr 1997) 41599; (May 1997) 41650; (Jun 1997) 41696–7; (Jul 1997) 41743; (Nov 1997) 41927
Court of Justice ruling on recruitment of women (Nov 1997) 41929
Cut in contributions called for (Aug 1997) 41784
Environmental fines (Jan 1997) 41468
Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Franco-German summit (Aug 1997) 41784
Multi-speed Europe question (Jan 1997) 41468
Tobacco advertising ban (Dec 1997) 41968
Foreign relations:
Austria (Jul 1997) 41754
Bosnia-Herzegovina (May 1997) 41654; (Sep 1997) 41834
Czech Republic (Jan 1997) 41461; (Mar 1997) 41553; (Apr 1997) 41607–8
France (Nov 1997) 41931
Iran
German statement on bilaterial relations (Aug 1997) 41793
Mykonos deaths ruling by German court (Apr 1997) 41612–13; (Jun 1997) 41716; (Sep 1997) 41843
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Libya (Nov 1997) 41927–8
Poland (Nov 1997) 41931
Russia
Kohl/Yeltsin meeting (Apr 1997) 41610
Return of plundered German art controversy (Apr 1997) 41610; (May 1997) 41659
Space mission (Feb 1997) 41522
USA (Jan 1997) 41464; (Mar 1997) 41560; (Jun 1997) 41697
Free Democratic Party (FDP):
Criticism of Waigel (Aug 1997) 41781–2
Tax reform tensions (Jan 1997) 41464
Green party: (May 1997) 41651
Hamburg: State elections (Sep 1997) 41829
Health: BSE beef scare (Jan 1997) 41468–9

GERMANY (contd)
Human rights: (Jan 1997) 41464; (Jul 1997) 41743
Nuclear issues: Anti-nuclear protests (Mar 1997) 41560
Obituary of Remer (Nazi leader): (Oct 1997) 41882
Political parties: (Sep 1997) 41829
Racial issues:
see also Security
Arson deaths of foreigners (Apr 1997) 41599
Attacks on homes of refugees (May 1997) 41651
Neo-Nazi links with military allegations (Dec 1997) 41971–2
Status of children of immigrants (Apr 1997) 41599
Religious affairs: Scientologists (Jan 1997) 41464; (Jun 1997) 41697
Resignations: Bank chief (Sep 1997) 41829
Security:
Ban on demonstrations commemorating the death of Hess (Aug 1997) 41782
Demonstrations following arson deaths (Apr 1997) 41599
Neo-Nazis (May 1997) 41651; (Aug 1997) 41782; (Dec 1997) 41971–2
Police (Jul 1997) 41743
Strikes and demonstrations (Mar 1997) 41560
Social Democratic Party (SPD):
Election 1998 candidates for Chancellor (Apr 1997) 41599
Gold reserves revaluation plan criticised (May 1997) 41650; (Jun 1997) 41696
Hamburg elections reverses (Sep 1997) 41829
Tax-reform legislation (Feb 1997) 41512; (Apr 1997) 41599; (Jul 1997) 41743; (Aug 1997) 41782; (Nov 1997) 41927; (Dec 1997) 41972
Space research: Russian-German mission (Feb 1997) 41522
Trials:
Berlin disco bombing (1986) (Nov 1997) 41927–8
Bosnian Serbs sentenced for massacring Muslims (May 1997) 41654; (Sep 1997) 41834
Krenz (former East German head of state) (Aug 1997) 41782; (Sep 1997) 41829
Mykonos restaurant killings of Kurds verdicts (Apr 1997) 41612–13
Schneider convicted of credit fraud and forgery (Dec 1997) 41972
Stasi officers (Feb 1997) 41512
Wolf (former Stasi chief) (Jan 1997) 41464; (May 1997) 41651
War crimes: Slave labour judgment (Nov 1997) 41941

GHANA
Appointments: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41901
Economy: Taxation (Feb 1997) 41483
Foreign relations:
Nigeria (Jan 1997) 41435
USA (Jan 1997) 41435
President: Rawlings sworn in for second term (Jan 1997) 41435

GIBRALTAR
Security: Spanish ETA Basque separatists (Aug 1997) 41783
UK-Spain relations re future sovereignty: (Jan 1997) 41462–3; (Jul 1997) 41742; (Dec 1997) 41971

GREECE
Aid to: Albania (Oct 1997) 41876
Air crash: (Dec 1997) 41972
Economy:
Agriculture (Jan 1997) 41462
Austerity measures (Jan 1997) 41462; (Oct 1997) 41887
Budget (Nov 1997) 41928; (Dec 1997) 41972
Currency (Nov 1997) 41928
General strike (Oct 1997) 41887
Trade unions (Oct 1997) 41887
European Union (EU):
Multi-speed Europe (Jan 1997) 41468
Schengen Convention (Jun 1997) 41701

GREECE (contd)
Single currency (Jan 1997) 41462; (Apr 1997) 41559; (Oct 1997) 41887; (Nov 1997) 41928
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41556; 41558; (Aug 1997) 41789; (Oct 1997) 41876
Macedonia
Crete summit (Nov 1997) 41934
Negotiations on permanent name (Jun 1997) 41704
Visit by Greek Foreign Minister (Mar 1997) 41556
Serbia (Jan 1997) 41455
Turkey
Agreement on peaceful resolution of disputes (Jul 1997) 41746
Crete summit (Nov 1997) 41934
Cyprus
Arms build-up (Jan 1997) 41461–2
TRNC "partial integration" agreement (Aug 1997) 41789
Turkish military exercises (Nov 1997) 41929
War games (Oct 1997) 41877
Denial of violation of Greek airspace on Christmas Day (Dec 1997) 41973
Expulsions of diplomats for spying (Dec 1997) 41973
Greek support for PKK Kurds alleged (Jun 1997) 41703
Wise men group to help resolve territorial disputes (Apr 1997) 41604
Local government: Reform plans (Nov 1997) 41928
New Democracy party: Leader (Mar 1997) 41559
Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok):
Expulsion of deputies (Dec 1997) 41972
Prime Minister: Visit to Albania (Oct 1997) 41876
Security: Strikes and demonstrations (Jan 1997) 41462; (Oct 1997) 41887; (Nov 1997) 41928
Supreme Court rulings: Seizure of ex-King's property upheld (Jun 1997) 41698

GREENLAND *see* DENMARK

GRENADA
Dismissals: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41732
Obituary of Gairy (former Prime Minister): (Aug 1997) 41769

GROUP OF SEVEN *see* INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

GROUP OF TEN *see* INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

GROUP OF 15 *see* DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

GROUP OF 24 *see* DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

GUAM, Air crash: (Aug 1997) 41779–80

GUATEMALA
see also CENTRAL AMERICA
Appointments:
Military (Jul 1997) 41729
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41442
Armed forces: Leadership changes (Jul 1997) 41729
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41442
Dismissals: Military (Jul 1997) 41729
Foreign relations:
China (Jan 1997) 41441
Taiwan (Jul 1997) 41738
USA (May 1997) 41635
Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG):
Criticism of peace implementation (Sep 1997) 41809
Leadership elections (Sep 1997) 41809
Moves to transform demobilised guerrillas into political party (Jun 1997) 41681
Human rights: Truth Commission panel (Feb 1997) 41491
Managua Declaration on regional political union: (Sep 1997) 41813

GUATEMALA (contd)
National Vanguard Party (PAN): (Jun 1997) 41681
Peace accord:
Anxieties over effect of new military appointments (Jul 1997) 41729
International aid to support (Jan 1997) 41441
UN observers vetoed by China (Jan 1997) 41441
URNG criticism of implementation of accord (Sep 1997) 41809
US support for (May 1997) 41635
Security:
see also Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG)
Killing of politician (Jun 1997) 41681
Trials: Police and former ministers for killing of law student (Aug 1997) 41769
UN: Truth Commission panel (Feb 1997) 41491

GUINEA
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41481; (Nov 1997) 41899
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41481; (Nov 1997) 41899
Economy: Budget (Jan 1997) 41435
Foreign relations:
Belgium (Apr 1997) 41577
Sierra Leone (May 1997) 41626; (Jun 1997) 41672
Rally of the Guinean People (RPG): (Jun 1997) 41675
Security: Coup plot allegations (Apr 1997) 41577
Trials: RPG officials sentenced (Jun 1997) 41675

GUINEA-BISSAU
Appointments: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41673
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41673
Constitutional Court: Ruling on appointment of Prime Minister (Oct 1997) 51850
Economy:
Civil servants' protests (Jun 1997) 41673
Franc zone entry (Jan 1997) 41435
Foreign relations: Western Sahara (Apr 1997) 41616
President: Death of son in air crash (Feb 1997) 41483
Prime Minister: Correia dismissed and reappointed (Oct 1997) 41850
Security: Riots (Jun 1997) 41673

GULF CO-OPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)
Bahrain-Qatar dispute: (Mar 1997) 41568–9
Consultative council to be established: (Aug 1997) 41797
Foreign ministers' meetings: (Jun 1997) 41716; (Sep 1997) 41844; (Nov 1997) 41940
Foreign relations: UK (Dec 1997) 41981
Iran: Improved relations (Nov 1997) 41939; (Dec 1997) 41985
Iran-UAE dispute: (Dec 1997) 41981
Summit: (Dec 1997) 41981
Turkish offensive against Kurds criticised: (Jun 1997) 41716

GUYANA
Appointments: (Mar 1997) 41534
Corruption: Electoral fraud allegations (Dec 1997) 41954
Economy: Debt write-off (Apr 1997) 41586
Elections: (Dec 1997) 41954
Obituary of President Jagan: (Mar 1997) 41534
Organisation of American States (OAS): (Dec 1997) 41954
People's Progressive Party: (Apr 1997) 41586; (Dec 1997) 41954
Political parties: (Dec 1997) 41954
President:
Death of Jagan (Mar 1997) 41534
Hinds sworn in as interim president (Mar 1997) 41534
Janet Jagan sworn in (Dec 1997) 41954
Racial issues: (Dec 1997) 41954
Security: Demonstrations (Dec 1997) 41954

H

HAITI
see also CARIBBEAN
Appointments: Prime Minister (Jul 1997) 41732
Caribbean Community (CARICOM) membership: (Jul 1997) 41731
Drugs: (Mar 1997) 41536
Economy:
Austerity programme (Jun 1997) 41682
Budget (May 1997) 41633
Foreign aid (Apr 1997) 41586
IMF structural adjustment programme (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585
Trade unions (Mar 1997) 41536
Elections:
Congressional and local (Apr 1997) 41585–6
Postponement of run-off elections (May 1997) 41633; (Jun 1997) 41682
Electoral commission established: (Nov 1997) 41907
Ferry disaster: (Sep 1997) 41812
Foreign relations:
Dominican Republic, Deportations of Haitians (Feb 1997) 41490
USA (Oct 1997) 41859; (Dec 1997) 41956
Land reform: (Feb 1997) 41490
Lavalas Family party: (Apr 1997) 41586; (Jun 1997) 41682
Lavalas Political Organisation (OPL): (Jun 1997) 41682
Map: (Apr 1997) 41586
Organisation of American States (OAS):
Election procedures criticised (May 1997) 41633
Resolutions on peacekeeping presence (Jun 1997) 41683
President: Land distribution (Feb 1997) 41490
Prime Minister:
Denis
Nominated (Nov 1997) 41907
Rejected by Chamber of Deputies (Dec 1997) 41956
Pierre
Named as new PM (Jul 1997) 41732
Rejected by Chamber of Deputies (Aug 1997) 41769
Smarth
Censure motion defeated (Mar 1997) 41536
Resignation (Jun 1997) 41682
President urged to appoint new PM (Sep 1997) 41812
Withdrawal from government (Oct 1997) 41859
Resignations:
Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41812
Prime Minister (Jun 1997) 41682
Security:
Fears of violence (Dec 1997) 41956
Student protests over school closures (May 1997) 41633
US troops to assist with public works projects (Dec 1997) 41956
Violence (Mar 1997) 41536
UN:
Civilian police mission (Dec 1997) 41956
Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) (Jan 1997) 41438; (Dec 1997) 41956

HONDURAS
see also CENTRAL AMERICA
Appointments:
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41442
Police chief (Aug 1997) 41766
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41442
Constitution: National Congress size (Oct 1997) 41859
Defence: Armed forces, Abolition of Commander-in-chief post (Sep 1997) 41809
Elections:
Mayoral (Nov 1997) 41904
Presidential and congressional (Nov 1997) 41904; (Dec 1997) 41953
Foreign relations:
Nicaragua (Jun 1997) 41683
Taiwan (Jul 1997) 41738; (Sep 1997) 41814

HONDURAS (contd)
Liberal Party of Honduras (PLH): (Nov 1997) 41904; (Dec 1997) 41953
Managua Declaration on regional political union: (Sep 1997) 41813
Political parties: (Nov 1997) 41904; (Dec 1997) 41953
Religious affairs: Archbishop appointed as police chief (Aug 1997) 41766
Security: Prison riots and escape (Aug 1997) 41766
Territorial waters: (Jun 1997) 41683

HONG KONG
Appointments:
Executive Council of Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) (Jan 1997) 41446–7; (Jul 1997) 41732–3
Foreign affairs office chief (Chinese) (Jun 1997) 41690–1
Judiciary (May 1997) 41639
Armed forces:
Entry of Chinese Liberation Army (PLA) troops (Jul 1997) 41733
Gurkhas' right to move to UK (Feb 1997) 41494
Chemical weapons: (May 1997) 41638
China-Hong Kong road link approved: (Jan 1997) 41447
Citizens' Party formed: (May 1997) 41639
Corruption:
Immigration chief's retirement controversy (Jan 1997) 41447
US extradition ruling controversy over Lui (Jan 1997) 41447
Democratic Party (DP):
Condemnation of lawmaking by provisional assembly (Jan 1997) 41447; (May 1997) 41638
Criticism of Tung's policy address (Oct 1997) 41861
Delegation visit to USA (Apr 1997) 41590
Failure to obtain nominations for Chinese Ninth National People's Congress (NPC) (Dec 1997) 41960
Proportional representation plans attacked by DP (Jul 1997) 41733
Economy:
Budget (Mar 1997) 41541–2
Central bank (Oct 1997) 41861
IMF annual assessment (Nov 1997) 41911
Regional currency crisis (Oct 1997) 41860–1
Stock market fall (Oct 1997) 41861
Strength at time of handover (Jul 1997) 41732
Elections:
Electoral law (Sep 1997) 41814
Timetable for 1998 announced (Jul 1997) 41733
Foreign relations:
Japan (May 1997) 41640
Summit of the Eight communiqué (Jun 1997) 41717
Taiwan, Removal of Taiwanese flags (Oct 1997) 41861
UK, Opening of new consulate building (Jan 1997) 41447
USA (Jan 1997) 41447; (Mar 1997) 41542; (Apr 1997) 41589; 41590; (Sep 1997) 41814
Foreign trade:
Taiwan (Jan 1997) 41446
USA, Sanctions against company accused of selling chemical weapons (May 1997) 41638
Governor:
Bill of rights repeal proposal condemned (Jan 1997) 41447
Civil liberties proposals criticised (May 1997) 41638–9
Handover to China:
see also Legislative Council (Legco)
Ceremonies and meetings (Jul 1997) 41732
Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) unit arrival (Apr 1997) 41590; (Jun 1997) 41690
Joint Liaison Group (JLG), Chinese garrison impasse (Mar 1997) 41542; (Apr 1997) 41590
Pre-handover legislation frozen (Jul 1997) 41733
Preparatory Committee, Bill of rights repeal proposal (Jan 1997) 41447; (Feb 1997) 41493

HONG KONG (contd)
Right of abode for emigrants grace period extended (Apr 1997) 41590
Human rights:
Bill of rights repeal (Jan 1997) 41447; (Feb 1997) 414923
US extradition ruling controversy (Jan 1997) 41447
Judiciary: Nomination of chief justice (May 1997) 41639
Legislative Council (Legco):
Legislation frozen by HKSAR (Jul 1997) 41733
Select committee investigation early retirement of immigration chief (Jan 1997) 41447
Media: Imprisoned journalist released by Chinese authorities (Jan 1997) 41447
Provisional Legislative Council (PLC):
Election law (Sep 1997) 41814
Members sworn in (Jul 1997) 41733
Policy address by Chief Executive (Oct 1997) 41861
Security:
Closure of Vietnamese detention camp (Jan 1997) 41447
Demonstrations (Jun 1997) 41691; (Dec 1997) 41960
Triads, Pact with China reported (May 1997) 41639
Special Administrative Region (HKSAR):
Appointment of Chinese foreign affairs chief (Jun 1997) 41690–1
Basic Law (Feb 1997) 41493; (May 1997) 41639
Boundaries redrawn (Aug 1997) 41771
Chief Executive Tung
Inaugural policy address (Jul 1997) 41733
Planned visit to USA called off (Apr 1997) 41590
Policy address to Provisional Legislative Council (PLC) (Oct 1997) 41861
Sworn in (Jul 1997) 41732–3
Visit to USA with Chan and Lee (Sep 1997) 41814
Civil liberties discussions (Feb 1997) 41493; (Apr 1997) 41590; (May 1997) 41638–9
Civil service continuity (Feb 1997) 41493–4; (Mar 1997) 41542
Elections to Ninth National People's Congress (NPC) (Dec 1997) 41960
Executive Council (Jan 1997) 41446–7; (Jul 1997) 41732–3
Provisional assembly
First meeting/election of Speaker (Jan 1997) 41447
Status question (Apr 1997) 41590
Passage of first law (May 1997) 41638
UK passports for non-Chinese Hong Kong residents: (Feb 1997) 41494

HUMAN RIGHTS
see also AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL; DEATH PENALTY; EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS; UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (UNCHR)
Algeria: (Aug 1997) 41796; (Nov 1997) 41935
Argentina:
Galtieri arrest warrant issued in Spain (Mar 1997) 41532
Police brutality (Apr 1997) 41584
Spanish arrest warrants for former naval officers involved in "disappeared" (Oct 1997) 41858
Australia: Aborigines (May 1997) 41644; (Dec 1997) 41966
Belarus: (Feb 1997) 41509; (Apr 1997) 41610
Bolivia: (Jun 1997) 41680
Brazil: (Apr 1997) 41584; (Jul 1997) 41730
Burma: (Feb 1997) 41502; (Apr 1997) 41594; (Jun 1997) 41684; 41686
Burundi:
see also REFUGEES, Burundi
Government forcibly "regrouping" people (Mar 1997) 41526
Cambodia: (Sep 1997) 41821–2; (Oct 1997) 41870
Cameroon: (Jul 1997) 41725
Canada: (Jan 1997) 41442
Chad: (Jan 1997) 41433; (Apr 1997) 41578

HUMAN RIGHTS (contd)
Chile: (Jul 1997) 41730; (Oct 1997) 41858
China:
Critical resolution defeated at UN (Apr 1997) 41586
Labour activists imprisoned (Jun 1997) 41689–90
Releases of dissidents (Nov 1997) 41912
Reprieve for four Tiananmen Square protestors (Jun 1997) 41689
State Council white paper on religious freedom (Oct 1997) 41860
US protests concerning (Oct 1997) 41860
US report (Jan 1997) 41445–6
Wei Jingsheng released for medical treatment in USA (Nov 1997) 41912
Workers' protests over wage arrears (Oct 1997) 41860
Colombia: (Jul 1997) 41731; (Aug 1997) 41767; (Nov 1997) 41905
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre): (Jun 1997) 41669; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848; (Nov 1997) 41896–7; (Dec 1997) 41946
Croatia: (Sep 1997) 41834
Cuba: (Jan 1997) 41442; (Apr 1997) 41585
Dominican Republic: (Feb 1997) 41490
East Timor: (Jun 1997) 41685
Equatorial Guinea: (Jul 1997) 41723
Estonia: (Jan 1997) 41460; (Nov 1997) 41924
Europe: Single European Court of Human Rights to be established (Oct 1997) 41887
France: (Mar 1997) 41561
Germany: (Jan 1997) 41464; (Jul 1997) 41743
Guatemala: Truth Commission panel (Feb 1997) 41491
Hong Kong:
Bill of rights repeal (Jan 1997) 41447; (Feb 1997) 414923
US extradition ruling controversy (Jan 1997) 41447
Indonesia: (Feb 1997) 41502; (Jun 1997) 41685; (Nov 1997) 41918–19
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966): (Aug 1997) 41772
International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH): (Jan 1997) 41433
Kenya: (Jan 1997) 41432; (Apr 1997) 41578–9
Korea, North: (Aug 1997) 41772
Kyrgyzstan: (Jun 1997) 41694; (Nov 1997) 41912
Mali: (Sep 1997) 41804
Mauritania: (Dec 1997) 41944
Mexico: (Mar 1997) 41535; (Oct 1997) 41856; (Nov 1997) 41904
Nigeria:
Abacha's possible amnesty offer (Nov 1997) 41899
Abiola's continued detention (Nov 1997) 41899
Canada's suspension of diplomatic relations over (Mar 1997) 41528
Commonwealth call for further information (Feb 1997) 41481
Death of journalist following release from police custody (Oct 1997) 41849
Objectors to oil and gas exploitation (Jun 1997) 41672
Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip): (Feb 1997) 41519; (Dec 1997) 41982
Papua New Guinea: (May 1997) 41644
Peru: (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41582–3; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Jul 1997) 41730
Rwanda:
see also UNITED NATIONS, Rwanda: Genocide tribunal
Allegations of new massacres (Nov 1997) 41897
Attacks on survivors of 1994 genocide (Mar 1997) 41525–6
France blamed for role in 1994 genocide (Nov 1997) 41897
Government denial of allegations of massacres (Aug 1997) 41761
Visit of UN high commissioner for human rights (Dec 1997) 41947
Saudi Arabia: (Nov 1997) 41936
Singapore: (Nov 1997) 41918

HUMAN RIGHTS (contd)
Sri Lanka: (Sep 1997) 41821
Sudan: (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949
Tibet: (Dec 1997) 41961
Tunisia: (Jan 1997) 41473; (Aug 1997) 41797
Turkey: (Aug 1997) 41788; (Nov 1997) 41930
UK: (Feb 1997) 41516; (Mar 1997) 41563
Uruguay: (Jun 1997) 41679
USA: (Aug 1997) 41765; (Sep 1997) 41808
Vietnam: (Sep 1997) 41823; (Nov 1997) 41917
Zaïre: (Apr 1997) 41573; (Jun 1997) 41669
Zambia: (Nov 1997) 41897
Zimbabwe: (May 1997) 41624

HUNGARY
Alliance of Free Democrats: Leadership (Apr 1997) 41607; (May 1997) 41655–6
Constitution: Wording of referendum (Oct 1997) 41873
Corruption:
Peto (privatisation controversy) (Apr 1997) 41607
Privatisation scandal (Apr 1997) 41607; (Jun 1997) 41706; (Jul 1997) 41750
Defence: Romania agreement (Feb 1997) 41511
Dismissals: Intelligence service officials (Mar 1997) 41554
Economy:
Budget (Dec 1997) 41977
Land laws (Oct 1997) 41873
Privatisation (Oct 1997) 41873
World Bank loan (Mar 1997) 41554
Environment: Gabcikovo-Nagymaros hydroelectric project dispute with Slovakia (Mar 1997) 41553; (Sep 1997) 41831
European Union (EU) membership question: (May 1997) 41655; (Dec 1997) 41968
Federation of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP): (Sep 1997) 41831; (Dec 1997) 41977
Foreign relations:
Italy (May 1997) 41655
Romania
Ciorbea's visit to Hungary (Mar 1997) 41558
Defence agreement (Feb 1997) 41511
Horn's visit to Romania (Oct 1997) 41874
President Gonez's visit to Romania (May 1997) 41655
Romanian education law amendments (Dec 1997) 41978
Slovakia
Hydroelectric project dispute (Mar 1997) 41553; (Sep 1997) 41831
Repatriation proposals for ethnic Hungarians dispute (Sep 1997) 41831
Summit (Aug 1997) 41791
Slovenia (May 1997) 41655
Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF): (Mar 1997) 41554; (Sep 1997) 41831; (Dec 1997) 41977
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP): (Mar 1997) 41554; (Jun 1997) 41706
NATO membership ambitions: (Feb 1997) 41511; (May 1997) 41655; (Oct 1997) 41873; (Nov 1997) 41932
Political parties: (Mar 1997) 41554; (Sep 1997) 41831; (Dec 1997) 41977
President:
Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Visits to, Romania (May 1997) 41655
Prime Minister:
Meetings with
Romanian Prime Minister (Mar 1997) 41558
Slovakian Prime Minister (Aug 1997) 41791
Slovenian and Italian Prime Ministers (May 1997) 41655
Vetting committee report on Horn (Sep 1997) 41831
Visit to Romania (Oct 1997) 41874
Referendum:
NATO membership application favoured (Nov 1997) 41932
Wording criticised (Oct 1997) 41873
Security: Intelligence Office (Mar 1997) 41554
War crimes: Agreement on implementation of 1947 Paris Peace Treaty (Mar 1997) 41553

I

IBRD *see* WORLD BANK

ICELAND
Economy: EU liquor monopoly ruling (Mar 1997) 41563
Foreign relations:
Norway (Nov 1997) 41924
Taiwan (Oct 1997) 41861

ICJ *see* INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)

ICRC *see* INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT (ICRC)

IDA *see* INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (IDA)

IDB *see* INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB)

IGAD *see* INTER-GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)

IMF *see* INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)

IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION
Asylum issues:
UK (Feb 1997) 41516; (Nov 1997) 41931–2
USA, Return of Cubans involved in hijackings (Oct 1997) 41859
Australia: Restrictions on immigration (May 1997) 41644
Austria: (Feb 1997) 41512
Central American summit: (May 1997) 41634
Denmark: Government policy (Oct 1997) 41882
European Union (EU): Schengen Convention (Jul 1997) 41746
France:
National laws amendments (Dec 1997) 41971
Opposition to proposed legislation on foreign visitors (Feb 1997) 41513
Policy announcements (Aug 1997) 41782–3; (Dec 1997) 41971
Review of legislation promised (Jun 1997) 41695
Germany:
Arson deaths (Apr 1997) 41599
Attacks on homes of refugees (May 1997) 41651
Status of "guest" children (Apr 1997) 41599
Iran: (Jan 1997) 41472
Macedonia: Illegal Albanian immigrants (Sep 1997) 41835
Saudi Arabia: Expulsion of illegal workers (Oct 1997) 41889
Slovakia: Appeal to Romanies not to seek asylum abroad (Nov 1997) 41931–2
Spain: Security systems for North African enclaves (Sep 1997) 41828

INDIA
50th anniversary of independence celebrations: (Aug 1997) 41775; (Oct 1997) 41865
Akali Dal: Punjab elections (Feb 1997) 41499
Andra Pradesh: Maoist People's War Group (PWG) (Jan 1997) 41448
Appointments:
Banking (Nov 1997) 41914
Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41586–7; (May 1997) 41636; (Jun 1997) 41691
Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41586–7
Assam:
Assassination attempt on Chief Minister (Jun 1997) 41691
Banning of Bodoland Liberation Tigers Front (Oct 1997) 41865
Bombing (Jul 1997) 41740
Fighting with militants (Dec 1997) 41965
National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) (Aug 1997) 41775
United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) (Sep 1997) 41820
Violence (Aug 1997) 41775
Aviation: Air crashes (Nov 1997) 41914
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP):

INDIA (contd)
Ayodhya mosque conspiracy charges (Sep 1997) 41820
Coalition negotiations with Congress (I) (Dec 1997) 41964
Parliamentary seats (Mar 1997) 41543
Political negotiations (Nov 1997) 41914
Punjab elections (Feb 1997) 41499
Uttar Pradesh (Oct 1997) 41864–5
Bihar:
Calls for imposition of direct president's rule (Jul 1997) 41740; (Aug 1997) 41774
Chief Minister (Jul 1997) 41739–40; (Aug 1997) 41774
Deployment of paramilitaries (Jun 1997) 41691
Election preparations (Dec 1997) 41964
Massacre (Dec 1997) 41965
Yadav (JD leader) (Apr 1997) 41587; (Jun 1997) 41691; (Jul 1997) 41739–40; (Dec 1997) 41964
Bombay: Demonstration deaths (Jul 1997) 41740
Cabinet: (Apr 1997) 41586–7; (May 1997) 41636; (Jun 1997) 41691
Chemical weapons: (Aug 1997) 41797
Communist Party of India (CPI): (Dec 1997) 41965
Congress (I):
Coalition negotiations with BJP (Dec 1997) 41964
Defeat in Punjab state elections (Feb 1997) 41499
Defections (Dec 1997) 41964
Gandhi, Sonia (May 1997) 41636–7; (Aug 1997) 41774
Kesri
Elected parliamentary leader (Jan 1997) 41448
Re-elected party president (Jun 1997) 41691
Leadership (May 1997) 41636–7; (Jun 1997) 41691
Negotiations with United Front (Apr 1997) 41586–7
Plenary session (Aug 1997) 41774
Withdrawal of support from
Coalition government (Mar 1997) 41543; (Nov 1997) 41914
Government austerity programme (Jan 1997) 41448
Corruption:
see also Trials
Bihar, Yadav (Jun 1997) 41691; (Jul 1997) 41739–40; (Aug 1997) 41774; (Dec 1997) 41964
Bofors (Feb 1997) 41499–500; (May 1997) 41637
Condemned by Prime Minister Gujral (Aug 1997) 41775
Janata Dal (JD) (Apr 1997) 41586–7; (Jun 1997) 41691; (Jul 1997) 41739–40; (Aug 1997) 41774
St Kitts forgery case (Jun 1997) 41691
Death penalty: (Nov 1997) 41914
Defence:
Deaths of Defence Minister and senior officers (Nov 1997) 41914
Landmines (Sep 1997) 41845
Prithvi missile production (Sep 1997) 41820
Disasters:
Ferry lost on the River Ganges (Sep 1997) 41820
Fires
New Delhi cinema (Jun 1997) 41691
Oil refinery (Sep 1997) 41820
Orissa state pilgrim encampment (Feb 1997) 41500
Tamil Nadu temple (Jun 1997) 41691
Flood deaths (Aug 1997) 41775
Landslides in Sikkim (Jun 1997) 41691
Rail crash (Sep 1997) 41820
School bus crash (Nov 1997) 41914
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK): (Jul 1997) 41740; (Nov 1997) 41914
Earthquake: (May 1997) 41637
Economy:
Budget (Mar 1997) 41543–4; (May 1997) 41636
Deficit-reduction measures (Sep 1997) 41819

INDIA (contd)
Energy needs (May 1997) 41636; (Jun 1997) 41692; (Jul 1997) 41739
Privatisation (Sep 1997) 41819
Reserve Bank of India (Nov 1997) 41914
Trade unions (Jan 1997) 41448
Elections:
Legislative, Timetable (Dec 1997) 41964
Presidential (Jul 1997) 41740
Punjab state (Feb 1997) 41499
Vice-President (Aug 1997) 41775
Environment:
Hydroelectric agreement with Nepal (Jun 1997) 41692
Water-sharing agreement with Bangladesh (Jul 1997) 41739
Foreign relations:
Bangladesh (Jul 1997) 41739
Bhutan (Apr 1997) 41588
Fiji (Sep 1997) 41825
Nepal, Water treaty ratified (Jun 1997) 41692
Pakistan
Demonstrations by Pakistanis (Oct 1997) 41865
Eighth round of talks (Mar 1997) 41543
Exchanges of fire on line of control (Aug 1997) 41775; (Sep 1997) 41819; (Oct 1997) 41865
Expulsion of diplomats (Sep 1997) 41819; (Oct 1997) 41865
Kashmir talks (Jun 1997) 41691; (Sep 1997) 41819; (Dec 1997) 41965
Kashmir and visit of Queen Elizabeth II (Oct 1997) 41865
Ministerial meetings (Apr 1997) 41588
Prime Ministers' meetings (May 1997) 41636; (Sep 1997) 41819
Sri Lanka (Nov 1997) 41914
UK, Visit of Queen Elizabeth II (Oct 1997) 41865
USA
Expulsion of US envoys (Feb 1997) 41500
Visit by US Commerce Secretary (Dec 1997) 41965
Foreign trade:
Pakistan (May 1997) 41636
USA (Dec 1997) 41965
Gandhi, Rajiv: Assassination investigation report (Nov 1997) 41914
Gujarat: Demonstration deaths (Jul 1997) 41740
Jammu and Kashmir: *see* KASHMIR
Janata Dal (JD):
Appointment of Gujral as Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41586–7
Corruption allegations (Apr 1997) 41586–7; (Jun 1997) 41691; (Jul 1997) 41739–40
National convention (Aug 1997) 41774
Split (Jul 1997) 41740; (Aug 1997) 41774
Yadav arrested (Jul 1997) 41739–40
Jharkand Mukti Morcha party (JMM): (Sep 1997) 41820
Judicial reforms: (Jul 1997) 41740
Kashmir: *see* KASHMIR
Kerala: Bombings (Dec 1997) 41965
Lok Sabha: Dissolved (Dec 1997) 41964
Madhya Pradesh: Earthquake (May 1997) 41637
Manipur:
Ceasefire between underground groups (Aug 1997) 41775
Killings of security personnel (Dec 1997) 41965
Media: Broadcasting restrictions (May 1997) 41637
Nagaland:
Killings (Jul 1997) 41740
Truce between banned National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isaac Muivah (MSCN-IM) and government forces (Aug 1997) 41775
New Delhi: Bombings (Dec 1997) 41965
Obituary of Mother Teresa: (Sep 1997) 41820
Orissa: Fire in pilgrim encampment (Feb 1997) 41500
Political parties: (Feb 1997) 41499; (Apr 1997) 41587
President:
Narayanan sworn in (Jul 1997) 41740
Uttar Pradesh crisis (Oct 1997) 41864
Prime Minister:
Deve Gowda

INDIA (contd)
Austerity programme (Jan 1997) 41448
Resignation (Apr 1997) 41586
Gujral
Sworn in (Apr 1997) 41586–7
Address for independence anniversary celebrations (Aug 1997) 41775
Meetings with Pakistan Prime Minister (May 1997) 41636; (Sep 1997) 41819
Uttar Pradesh crisis (Oct 1997) 41864
Resignation (Nov 1997) 41914
Visit to Nepal (Jun 1997) 41692
Punjab:
State elections, Congress (I) defeated (Feb 1997) 41499
Train bomb (Jul 1997) 41740
Rao: *see* Trials
Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD): Formation of party (Jul 1997) 41740; (Aug 1997) 41774
Refugees from Bhutan: (Apr 1997) 41588
Religious affairs:
Catholic Church, Death of Mother Teresa (Sep 1997) 41820
Hindu-Muslim tension (Mar 1997) 41543
Tripura (Feb 1997) 41499
Resignations:
Bihar Chief Minister (Jul 1997) 41739–40
Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41586; (Nov 1997) 41914
Security:
Arrests
Assam and Kashmir separatists (Sep 1997) 41820
Bhutan refugee leader (Apr 1997) 41588
Assassination attempt on Assam Chief Minister (Jun 1997) 41691
Bodoland Liberation Tigers Front (Assam militants) banned (Oct 1997) 41865
Hindu-Muslim riots in Coimbatore (Nov 1997) 41914
Killings
Assam (Jul 1997) 41740; (Aug 1997) 41775; (Dec 1997) 41965
Bihar (Dec 1997) 41965
Bombay (Jul 1997) 41740
Gujarat (Jul 1997) 41740
Hyderabad bombing (Nov 1997) 41914
Kashmir (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jul 1997) 41740
Kerala (Dec 1997) 41965
Manipur (Dec 1997) 41965
Nagaland (Jul 1997) 41740
New Delhi (Dec 1997) 41965
Punjab train bomb (Jul 1997) 41740
Tamil Nadu (Dec 1997) 41965
Trade union leader (Jan 1997) 41448
Manipur ceasefire (Aug 1997) 41775
Maoist People's War Group (PWG), Andra Pradesh violence (Jan 1997) 41448
Nagaland truce (Aug 1997) 41775
Tripura tribal violence (Feb 1997) 41499
Uttar Pradesh (Mar 1997) 41543; (Oct 1997) 41864
Shiv Sena (pro-Hindu party): (Dec 1997) 41965
Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC): (May 1997) 41636
Tamil Nadu:
Bombings (Dec 1997) 41965
Hindu-Muslim riots in Coimbatore (Nov 1997) 41914
Links alleged between LTTE and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam with killing of Rajiv Gandhi (Nov 1997) 41914
Tamil Nadu People's Congress: (Dec 1997) 41964
Trials:
Ayodhya mosque suspects (Sep 1997) 41819–20
Murderers of Sikhs (Nov 1997) 41914
Rao
Opening of corruption and criminal conspiracy trial (Sep 1997) 41820
Withdrawal of St Kitts forgery case (Jun 1997) 41691
Yadav (JD president and Bihar chief minister) (Jun 1997) 41691
Trinamul Congress: (Dec 1997) 41964

INDIA (contd)
Tripura: Tribal violence (Feb 1997) 41499
United Front coalition:
Resignation of Deve Gowda government (Apr 1997) 41586
Uttar Pradesh crisis (Oct 1997) 41864
Withdrawal of Congress (I) support (Mar 1997) 41543; (Nov 1997) 41914
Uttar Pradesh:
Atrocities against Dalits (Oct 1997) 41864
Ayodhya mosque conspiracy charges (Sep 1997) 41820
Bahujan Samaj party (Oct 1997) 41864
Lawlessness (Mar 1997) 41543
Political crisis (Oct 1997) 41864–5

INDIAN OCEAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (IONARC), Inaugural meeting: (Mar 1997) 41570

INDONESIA
Air crashes: (Sep 1997) 41824; (Dec 1997) 41962
Appointments:
Military (Jun 1997) 41685; (Aug 1997) 41778
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41685
Armed forces: (Mar 1997) 41547; (Jun 1997) 41685; (Aug 1997) 41778
Arms deals with:
Russia (Aug 1997) 41778
USA, Cancelled (Jun 1997) 41685
Corruption:
Election fraud allegations (May 1997) 41644
Gold find hoax (May 1997) 41644; (Oct 1997) 41869
Drought: (Oct 1997) 41869
Earthquake in Sulawesi: (Sep 1997) 41824
East Timor:
see also UN *subhdg below*
All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue (AIETD) (Oct 1997) 41869
Death of resistance leader David Alex (Jul 1997) 41735
Election violence (May 1997) 41644
Human rights (Jun 1997) 41685; (Nov 1997) 41918–19
South African intervention (Aug 1997) 41758; 41778
University campus stormed by troops (Nov 1997) 41918
Economy:
Budget (Jan 1997) 41450
Central bank (Jul 1997) 41735; (Aug 1997) 41778
Currency difficulties (Jul 1997) 41735; (Aug 1997) 41778
Economists team to respond to financial crisis (Aug 1997) 41778
Financial crisis (Aug 1997) 41778; (Oct 1997) 41861; (Nov 1997) 41918
IMF credit approved (Nov 1997) 41918
Palm oil plantations (Sep 1997) 41824
Reform package (Nov 1997) 41918
Elections:
Legislative
Candidates (Jan 1997) 41450
Results (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41685
Madura (Jun 1997) 41685
Environment: Forest fires (Sep 1997) 41823–4; (Oct 1997) 41869
Ethnic issues:
Riots (Jan 1997) 41450
Transmigration programme (Jan 1997) 41450
West Kalimantan (Borneo) violence (Jan 1997) 41450; (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41547
Foreign relations:
Australia, Maritime treaty (Mar 1997) 41547
Burma (Sep 1997) 41821
Portugal (May 1997) 41644
South Africa (Aug 1997) 41758; 41778
USA (Jun 1997) 41685
Foreign trade:
Korea, South (Nov 1997) 41918
Russia (Aug 1997) 41778
Golkar alliance: Election victory (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41685

INDONESIA (contd)
Human rights: (Feb 1997) 41502; (Jun 1997) 41685; (Nov 1997) 41918–19
see also East Timor
Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI):
Election results (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41685
Faction clashes (Apr 1997) 41595
Megawati Sukamoputri
Exclusion from list of parliamentary candidates (Jan 1997) 41450
Rallies in support of (Apr 1997) 41595
Indonesian United Democratic Party (PUDI):
Arrest of Bintang (Mar 1997) 41547
Irian Jaya: Drought and famine (Oct 1997) 41869
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF): Peace talks (Jan 1997) 41451
Nuclear energy: (Feb 1997) 41501; (Aug 1997) 41778
Obituary of minister: (Dec 1997) 41962
People's Democratic Party (PRD): (Apr 1997) 41595
Political parties: (May 1997) 41643
President:
Business interests (Nov 1997) 41918
Suharto looking towards 7th term (May 1997) 41643; (Oct 1997) 41869
Security:
see also East Timor
Arrests
Bintang and other PUDI officials (Mar 1997) 41547
West Java (Nov 1997) 41919
Call for reduction of military intervention in politics (Mar 1997) 41547
Election violence (May 1997) 41643–4; (Jun 1997) 41685
Ethnic riots and violence (Jan 1997) 41450; (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41547; (Apr 1997) 41595; (Sep 1997) 41824
Sulawesi:
Earthquake (Sep 1997) 41824
Unrest (Sep 1997) 41824
Trials: PRD members (Apr 1997) 41595
UN:
East Timor question (May 1997) 41644; (Aug 1997) 41778
Investigation of death of East Timor resistance leader (Jul 1997) 41735
United Development Party (PPP): (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41685
West Kalimantan (Borneo): Ethnic violence (Jan 1997) 41450; (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41547

INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES
Group of Seven (G-7): Finance ministers and central bank governors meetings (Feb 1997) 41521–2; (Apr 1997) 41617; (Sep 1997) 41844
Group of Ten (G-10): (Apr 1997) 41617; (Sep 1997) 41844
Summit of the Eight (G-7 plus Russia): (Jun 1997) 41717

INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB), Guatemala: (Jan 1997) 41441

INTER-GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)
Somalia: (Dec 1997) 41950
Sudan southern civil war: (May 1997) 41627; (Jul 1997) 41720; (Aug 1997) 41761; (Sep 1997) 41804; (Oct 1997) 41852; (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41950
Summit: (Jul 1997) 41725

INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (IBRD) *see* WORLD BANK

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS (ICJ)
Singapore: (Nov 1997) 41918
Tibet: (Dec 1997) 41960–1

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS/CRESCENT (ICRC)
Albania: (Apr 1997) 41597

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS/CRESCENT (ICRC) (contd)
Colombia: Hostage release (Jun 1997) 41681
Iran: Earthquake relief (Feb 1997) 41520
Japan-North Korea agreement on home visits of Japanese wives: (Sep 1997) 41816
Korea, North: Famine (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Sep 1997) 41817; (Dec 1997) 41958–9
Landmines campaign: (Sep 1997) 41845
Peru hostage crisis: (Jan 1997) 41439; (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41582
Rwanda: Withdrawal of personnel (Feb 1997) 41478
Tajikistan: (Feb 1997) 41500
Zaïre: (May 1997) 41621

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)
Lockerbie bombing: Dispute between Libya and the UK and USA (Oct 1997) 41891
Slovakia-Hungary hydroelectric project dispute: (Mar 1997) 41553; (Sep 1997) 41831

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (IDA)
Armenia credits: (Aug 1997) 41788
Georgia: (Sep 1997) 41836

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)
Albania: (Jan 1997) 41454; (Apr 1997) 41597; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Nov 1997) 41933
Argentina: (May 1997) 41632–3
Asian financial crisis chronology: (Dec 1997) 41963
Azerbaijan: (Dec 1997) 41973
Bulgaria: (Jan 1997) 41453; (Feb 1997) 41506; (Mar 1997) 41558; (Apr 1997) 41604–5; (Oct 1997) 41876
Burma: (Mar 1997) 41545
Compensatory and contingency financing facility (CCFF): Bulgaria (Apr 1997) 41604; (May 1997) 41653
Currency markets study asked for by G-15 summit: (Nov 1997) 41941
Emergency aid for:
Korea, South (Nov 1997) 41909
Rwanda (Apr 1997) 41574; (Dec 1997) 41947
Enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF):
Cameroon (Aug 1997) 41763
Kenya (Aug 1997) 41762
Macedonia (Apr 1997) 41605
Pakistan (Oct 1997) 41865–6
Uganda (Nov 1997) 41900
Zambia (Jun 1997) 41675
Estonia agreement: (Nov 1997) 41924
Extended fund facility (EFF):
Croatia (Mar 1997) 41555; (Oct 1997) 41874
Moldova (Nov 1997) 41930
Pakistan (Oct 1997) 41865–6; (Dec 1997) 41966
Panama (Dec 1997) 41953
Philippines (Jul 1997) 41735
Russia (Feb 1997) 41508; (Apr 1997) 41609; (Oct 1997) 41880; (Dec 1997) 41975
Ukraine (Mar 1997) 41551; (Jun 1997) 41710
Hong Kong annual assessment: (Nov 1997) 41911
Membership: Palau (Dec 1997) 41968
Mexico: (Jan 1997) 41441
Pakistan: (Mar 1997) 41543
Palestinian economy: (Mar 1997) 41566
Papua New Guinea: (Sep 1997) 41825
Spring and autumn meetings: (Apr 1997) 41617; (Sep 1997) 41844
Standby arrangements:
Bulgaria (Mar 1997) 41558; (Apr 1997) 41604
Indonesia (Nov 1997) 41918
Korea, South (Dec 1997) 41957
Latvia (Oct 1997) 41881; (Dec 1997) 41976
Romania (Apr 1997) 41606–7; (May 1997) 41655
Thailand (Aug 1997) 41777
Ukraine (Aug 1997) 41787; (Nov 1997) 41923
Uruguay (Jun 1997) 41679
Structural adjustment programmes: Haiti (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) (contd)
Supplemental Reserve Facility (SRF): Korea, South (Dec 1997) 41957
Tajikistan emergency post-conflict assistance scheme: (Dec 1997) 41966
Thailand:
Appeal for help in crisis (Jul 1997) 41734; (Aug 1997) 41777
Rescue package (Sep 1997) 41844; (Oct 1997) 41868; (Nov 1997) 41916; (Dec 1997) 41962–3
Turkey: (Nov 1997) 41929–30; (Dec 1997) 41973
World Economic Outlook: (Apr 1997) 41618; (Sep 1997) 41844
World growth forecast reduction (Dec 1997) 41963
Yemen: (Nov 1997) 41936
Zimbabwe: (Sep 1997) 41801

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION (IWC) *see* ENVIRONMENT

INTERNET/WORLD WIDE WEB
China: (Jan 1997) 41446
Vietnam: (Mar 1997) 41546; (May 1997) 41643
WTO Information technology agreement: (Mar 1997) 41570

IONARC *see* INDIAN OCEAN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (IONARC)

IRA *see* IRELAND, NORTHERN, Irish Republican Army (IRA)

IRAN
Air crash (military aircraft): (Mar 1997) 41567
Appointments:
Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41792
Presidential advisers (Aug 1997) 41793; (Oct 1997) 41888
Vice-presidents (Aug 1997) 41792–3
Arms trade:
Missile co-operation with Russia and China allegations (Sep 1997) 41842
US prevention of aircraft purchase (Nov 1997) 41939
Ayatollah Khamenei: Legitimacy attacked by Ayatollah Montazeri (Nov 1997) 41939
Chemical weapons: (May 1997) 41638; (Nov 1997) 41941
Constitution: (Dec 1997) 41980
Council of Constitutional Guardians:
Presidential candidates approved (May 1997) 41661
Council of Ministers: (Aug 1997) 41792
Death penalty: (Sep 1997) 41843
Defence: Naval exercises (Oct 1997) 41888
Earthquakes: (Feb 1997) 41520; (Mar 1997) 41567; (May 1997) 41661
Economy: Budget (Dec 1997) 41980
Elections:
By-elections (Feb 1997) 41520
Presidential (May 1997) 41661; (Jun 1997) 41716
Espionage:
Russian expulsion of Iranian embassy employee (Nov 1997) 41939
US spy executed (Sep 1997) 41843
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (Jun 1997) 41693; (Dec 1997) 41966
Azerbaijan, Espionage (Apr 1997) 41612
Bahrain (Mar 1997) 41569
European Union (EU) (Apr 1997) 41612–13; (Jun 1997) 41716; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Sep 1997) 41843; (Nov 1997) 41939
Germany
German statement on bilateral relations (Aug 1997) 41793
Mykonos deaths ruling by German court (Apr 1997) 41612–13; (Jun 1997) 41716; (Sep 1997) 41843
Gulf Co-Operation Council (GCC) (Jun 1997) 41716
Iraq (Jan 1997) 41472; (Jun 1997) 41715; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Sep 1997) 41842; (Oct 1997) 41888
Israel (Sep 1997) 41842
Kuwait (Jun 1997) 41716
Lebanon (Oct 1997) 41888
Moldova (Nov 1997) 41939
Pakistan (Sep 1997) 41819
Palestinians (Jan 1997) 41470
Russia (Nov 1997) 41939
Saudi Arabia (Jan 1997) 41473; (Jul 1997) 41756
Sudan (Mar 1997) 41527
Syria (Jun 1997) 41715; (Jul 1997) 41756; (Aug 1997) 41793
Turkey, Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41703
Uganda (Mar 1997) 41527
United Arab Emirates (Dec 1997) 41981
USA
Despatch of US aircraft carrier to Gulf (Oct 1997) 41888
Execution of US spy (Sep 1997) 41843
Iran-Russia-China missile co-operation allegations (Sep 1997) 41842
MKO placed on list of banned terrorist organisations by USA (Oct 1997) 41888
President Khatami's call for dialogue (Dec 1997) 41980
Prevention of Iranian aircraft purchase from Moldova (Nov 1997) 41939
Reaction to election of President Khatami (Jun 1997) 41716
Saudi Arabia Al-Khobar bomb investigations (Jan 1997) 41473
Foreign trade:
European Union (EU) (Sep 1997) 41843; (Nov 1997) 41939
France (Sep 1997) 41842
Malaysia (Sep 1997) 41842
Russia (Sep 1997) 41842
Turkmenistan (Oct 1997) 41866; (Dec 1997) 41966
Freedom Movement of Iran: (Dec 1997) 41980
Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC): Improved relations with (Nov 1997) 41939; (Dec 1997) 41985
Immigration and emigration: Dismissal of foreign workers (Jan 1997) 41472
Kurds: *see* KURDS
Majlis: Speaker (May 1997) 41661
Mujahedeen-i-Khalq (MKO):
Added to list of banned terrorist organisations in USA (Oct 1997) 41888
Baghdad offices attacked (Jan 1997) 41472
Camps within Iraq attacked (Sep 1997) 41842
Nuclear issues: Iran-Russia agreement on nuclear power plant (Sep 1997) 41842
Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit: (Dec 1997) 41985
Petroleum:
Criticism of Azerbaijan-USA deal (Aug 1997) 41788
French investment in gas industry controversy (Sep 1997) 41842
Relations with Saudi Arabia (Jul 1997) 41756
President:
Election of Khatami (May 1997) 41661; (Jun 1997) 41716
Inauguration of Khatami (Aug 1997) 41792
Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (Dec 1997) 41985
Talks with Gulf Co-Operation Council (GCC) (Dec 1997) 41985
Qazvin province created: (Jan 1997) 41472
Refugees: (Jan 1997) 41472
Rushdie affair: Increased reward offered for Rushdie's death (Feb 1997) 41520
Security:
see also Islamic militants; KURDS
Arrests, Opposition leader (Dec 1997) 41980
Demonstrations and violence (Nov 1997) 41939
Release of Iraqi prisoners of war (Sep 1997) 41842
Sentencing of Iranian for killings of Kurds in Germany (Apr 1997) 41612–13
Servants of Iran's Construction (Group of Sixteen-G-16): (Jun 1997) 41716
Sport: Qualification for World Cup (Nov 1997) 41939

IRAQ
Appointments:
Military Industrialisation Organisation (MIO) director (Jun 1997) 41716
Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41793
Cabinet: (Aug 1997) 41793
Chemical weapons:
Discovered in 1992 by UN inspectors (Aug 1997) 41797
Gulf War (Apr 1997) 41580
US statement on Iraqi capability (Nov 1997) 41938
Death penalty: (Feb 1997) 41520; (Mar 1997) 41567; (Dec 1997) 41982
Defence:
see also Chemical weapons
Armed forces, Execution of officers reported for coup plot (Feb 1997) 41520
Landmines (Sep 1997) 41845
Economy: Energy deal with Turkey (May 1997) 41661–2
Foreign relations:
Bahrain (Nov 1997) 41938
Gulf Co-Operation Council (GCC) (Jun 1997) 41716; (Sep 1997) 41844
Iran (Jan 1997) 41472; (Jun 1997) 41715; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Sep 1997) 41842
Jordan (Dec 1997) 41982
Kuwait (Nov 1997) 41938
Russia (Nov 1997) 41938
Saudi Arabia (Apr 1997) 41613
Syria (Jun 1997) 41715; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Nov 1997) 41938
Turkey, Criticism of Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652
UK (Nov 1997) 41938
USA
see also UN
Aircraft carrier despatched to Gulf (Oct 1997) 41888
Deployment of alliance warplanes and naval vessels in Gulf (Nov 1997) 41938
Foreign trade:
Jordan (Dec 1997) 41982
Russia (Mar 1997) 41567
Syria (Aug 1997) 41793
Turkey (May 1997) 41661–2
Kurds: *see* KURDS
Obituaries:
Former Prime Minister (May 1997) 41662
Presidential adviser (Jan 1997) 41472
Opposition activities:
Iraqi National Congress (INC) disintegration reported (Mar 1997) 41567
Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI) (Feb 1997) 41520
Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC): (Jun 1997) 41715
Petroleum: *see* UN
Rail crash: (Aug 1997) 41793
Saddam Hussein:
Assassination attempts on
Qusai Hussein (Mar 1997) 41567
Udai Hussein (Jan 1997) 41472; (Jun 1997) 41715–16
Family difficulties (Jan 1997) 41472
Qusai reportedly replaced as Baghdad security chief (Aug 1997) 41793
Security:
Attack on MKO Baghdad offices (Jan 1997) 41472
Attack on World Health Organisation offices (Oct 1997) 41888
Coup plot failure report (Feb 1997) 41520
Execution of Jordanians for smuggling car parts (Dec 1997) 41982
UN:
Compensation Commission report on reparation payments (Mar 1997) 41567

IRAQ (contd)
Complaint to Security Council over Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652
Food delivery (Mar 1997) 41567; (Apr 1997) 41613
Malnutrition of children (UNICEF-WFP survey) (Jun 1997) 41715
Oil for food deal (Jun 1997) 41715; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Sep 1997) 41842; (Oct 1997) 41888; (Dec 1997) 41980
Special Commission (UNSCOM) head appointed (May 1997) 41661
Suspension of oil exports (Dec 1997) 41980
Travel ban on Iraqi officials (Nov 1997) 41938
Violation of southern air exclusion zone by Iraqi helicopters (Apr 1997) 41613
Weapons inspections
Access to presidential and sovereign sites withheld (Dec 1997) 41980
Exclusion of US inspectors called for by Iraq (Oct 1997) 41888
Expulsion of US inspectors (Nov 1997) 41938
Long-range missile parts agreement (Feb 1997) 41519–20
Russian intervention to calm crisis (Nov 1997) 41938
Special Commission (UNSCOM) reports (Apr 1997) 41613; (Oct 1997) 41888
Suspension of UNSCOM operations (Oct 1997) 41888
Withdrawal of UNSCOM (Nov 1997) 41938
World Health Organisation (WHO): Baghdad offices attacked (Oct 1997) 41888

IRELAND, NORTHERN
Alliance Party: (May 1997) 41648
Belfast: Election of Catholic mayor (Jun 1997) 41699
Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC): Disbanded (Oct 1997) 41886
Constitutional forum: *see* Peace process
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP):
Local elections (May 1997) 41648
Peace process (Jul 1997) 41745; (Aug 1997) 41781
Elections: Local (May 1997) 41648
Human rights: McAliskey detention (Feb 1997) 41516; (Mar 1997) 41563
Irish Nationalist Liberation Army (INLA): (Dec 1997) 41970
Irish Republican Army (IRA):
Attacks on RUC officers (Jan 1997) 41467
Bombings
Motorways and transport system (Apr 1997) 41600
Wilmslow (Mar 1997) 41563
Convictions in London (Dec 1997) 41970
Denial of defections (Nov 1997) 41926
Disruption campaign of hoaxes and small bombs (Apr 1997) 41600
Escape of Avril from Maze prison (Dec 1997) 41970
Killing of RUC officers (Jun 1997) 41699
McAliskey detention (Feb 1997) 41516; (Mar 1997) 41563
Maze prison escape attempt foiled (Mar 1997) 41563
Mitchell principles question (Sep 1997) 41825–6; (Nov 1997) 41926
Reclassification of republican prisoners (Aug 1997) 41781
Restoration of ceasefire (Jul 1997) 41744; (Aug 1997) 41781; (Nov 1997) 41926
Warnings of violence (Feb 1997) 41516
Whitemoor escape trial abandoned (Jan 1997) 41467–8
Loyalist Volunteer Force: (Nov 1997) 41926; (Dec 1997) 41970
Peace process:
All party talks (Jan 1997) 41467; (Mar 1997) 41563; (Oct 1997) 41886
Arms decommissioning difficulties (Jun 1997) 41699
Blair (UK Prime Minister)
Meetings with Adams (Oct 1997) 41886; (Dec 1997) 41970

IRELAND, NORTHERN (contd)
Peace initiative (May 1997) 41648; (Jul 1997) 41744–5
New Anglo-Irish peace iniative (Jun 1997) 41699
Sinn Féin invitation (Aug 1997) 41781; (Sep 1997) 41825–6
Withdrawal of UUP (Oct 1997) 41886
Political parties: (May 1997) 41648
Progressive Unionist Party (PUP): (Sep 1997) 41826
Security:
see also Irish Republican Army (IRA)
Arson attacks (Apr 1997) 41600
Bomb attack in Markethill blamed on republican paramilitaries (Sep 1997) 41826
Deteriorating situation (Jan 1997) 41467; (Dec 1997) 41970
Loyalist prison riot (Apr 1997) 41600
Marching season parades (May 1997) 41648; (Jul 1997) 41745
Maze prison
Escape attempt foiled (Mar 1997) 41563
Escape of Avril (Dec 1997) 41970
Killing of loyalist leader (Dec 1997) 41970
Plans to scrap internment (Sep 1997) 41826
Police (Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)) (Jul 1997) 41745
Relaxation of security measures (Nov 1997) 41926
Release of republican prisoners for Christmas (Dec 1997) 41970
Shooting of loyalist (Nov 1997) 41926
Targeting of Sinn Féin offices (Mar 1997) 41563
Sinn Féin:
Adams, Gerry
Call on government to reopen dialogue (Feb 1997) 41516
Election to UK Parliament (May 1997) 41648
Guarded welcome to peace iniative (Jun 1997) 41699
Meetings with Blair (Oct 1997) 41886; (Dec 1997) 41970
Talks with UK Northern Ireland Secretary (Aug 1997) 41781
Adoption of Mitchell principles (Sep 1997) 41925–6; (Nov 1997) 41926
Entry into talks process (Sep 1997) 41925–6
Invitation to multi-party talks (Aug 1997) 41781
Local election successes (May 1997) 41648
McGuinness, Election to UK Parliament (May 1997) 41648
Offices targeted (Mar 1997) 41563
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP):
Belfast mayor (Jun 1997) 41699
Call for IRA ceasefire (Feb 1997) 41516
Local elections (May 1997) 41648
Trials: Whitemoor escape trial abandoned (Jan 1997) 41467–8
Ulster Democratic Party: (Apr 1997) 41600; (Sep 1997) 41826
Ulster Freedom Fighters: (Apr 1997) 41600
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP): (May 1997) 41648; (Jun 1997) 41699; (Jul 1997) 41744–5; (Aug 1997) 41781; (Sep 1997) 41826; (Oct 1997) 41886
Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF): (Oct 1997) 41886; (Nov 1997) 41926

IRELAND, REPUBLIC OF
Appointments: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41699; (Oct 1997) 41886
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41699
Corruption:
Burke inquiry (Sep 1997) 41827; (Oct 1997) 41886
Haughey (Apr 1997) 41600–1; (Jul 1997) 41745; (Aug 1997) 41783–4; (Sep 1997) 41827
Political corruption tribunal (Apr 1997) 41600–1
Economy:
Budget (Jan 1997) 41468; (Dec 1997) 41979
Taxation (Jan 1997) 41468; (May 1997) 41649; (Dec 1997) 41979
Trade unions (Jan 1997) 41468
Elections:
Legislative
Timetable (May 1997) 41649

IRELAND, REPUBLIC OF (contd)
Results (Jun 1997) 41698
Presidential
Date set (Sep 1997) 41827
Success for McAleese (Oct 1997) 41886
Fianna Fáil:
Election campaign (May 1997) 41649
Election results (Jun 1997) 41698–9
Fine Gael:
Election campaign (May 1997) 41649
Election results (Jun 1997) 41698–9
Labour Party: Resignation of Dick Spring (Nov 1997) 41926
Political parties: (May 1997) 41649; (Jun 1997) 41698
President:
McAleese elected (Oct 1997) 41886
Robinson
Decision not to seek re-election (Mar 1997) 41564
Early resignation (Jul 1997) 41745; (Sep 1997) 41827
Nomination as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Jun 1997) 41717; (Sep 1997) 41827
Progressive Democrats: (May 1997) 41649; (Jun 1997) 41698–9
Religious affairs: Catholic priest convicted of sexual abuse (Jul 1997) 41745
Resignations:
Labour Party leader (Nov 1997) 41926
Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41886
Sinn Féin: (Jun 1997) 41698
Trials: Priest convicted of sexual abuse (Jul 1997) 41745

ISRAEL
see also MIDDLE EAST, Peace process
Appointments:
Attorney General (Jan 1997) 41470–1
Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41754–5
Prime Minister's Office chief (Dec 1997) 41982
Security (Jul 1997) 41755
Arms trade with:
Lebanon (Apr 1997) 41615
Poland (Oct 1997) 41872
Aviation: Army helicopter collision (Feb 1997) 41517
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41754–5
Corruption:
Bar-On (Attorney General) scandal (Jan 1997) 41470–1; (Feb 1997) 41518; (Apr 1997) 41613–14; (May 1997) 41662
Olmert (Jan 1997) 41471
Defence:
see also LEBANON, South Lebanese Army (SLA)
Armed forces
Helicopter collision (Feb 1997) 41517
Northern defences (Jan 1997) 41470
Lebanon fighting *see* Foreign relations: Lebanon; LEBANON, Hezbollah
Mossad Working Plan on Syrian defences published (Jan 1997) 41470
Economy:
Budget (Jan 1997) 41471
Exchange rate policy (Jun 1997) 41714
General strikes (Sep 1997) 41841; (Dec 1997) 41982
Trade unions (Dec 1997) 41982
Espionage: Israeli spy sentenced by Egyptian court (Sep 1997) 41841
Foreign relations:
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sep 1997) 41841
Croatia (Aug 1997) 41796
Czech Republic (Sep 1997) 41831
Egypt (Feb 1997) 41518; (Aug 1997) 41794; (Sep 1997) 41841
European Union (EU) (Aug 1997) 41794
Iran (Sep 1997) 41842
Japan (Aug 1997) 41796
Jordan
Attack on Israeli embassy (Sep 1997) 41841
Condemnation of Jerusalem suicide bombing (Aug 1997) 41794

ISRAEL (contd)
Helicopter crash deaths condolences (Feb 1997) 41517
Killing of Israeli schoolgirls by Jordanian soldier (Mar 1997) 41566; (Jun 1997) 41714–15; (Jul 1997) 41755
Mossad involvement in failed assassination of Hamas official alleged (Sep 1997) 41841; (Oct 1997) 41890
Release of Shaikh Yassin (Oct 1997) 41890
Resignation of Israeli ambassador to Jordan (May 1997) 41662
Settlements issue (Feb 1997) 41518
Trade fair protests (Jan 1997) 41472
Water supplies dispute (May 1997) 41662
Korea, South (Aug 1997) 41796
Lebanon
see also LEBANON, Hezbollah
Casualty figures (Jan 1997) 41471–2
Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group (ILMG) (Jan 1997) 41471; (May 1997) 41663
Israeli presence policy debate (Feb 1997) 41517
Jerusalem suicide bomb (Aug 1997) 41794
Lebanese Christians sentenced for contacts with Israeli agents (Nov 1997) 41937
Rocket attack on northern Israel (Jan 1997) 41471
SLA warning to Israel against withdrawal of troops (Oct 1997) 41889
UN Resolution on Qana shelling (Jun 1997) 41715
Withdrawal from Lebanon calls in wake of failed commando raid (Sep 1997) 41840–1; (Oct 1997) 41889; (Nov 1997) 41937
Russia (Mar 1997) 41566
Saudi Arabia (Aug 1997) 41794
Sudan (Jun 1997) 41673–4; (Oct 1997) 41890
Syria
see also MIDDLE EAST, Peace process; MIDDLE EAST, Peace talks
Damascus bombing blamed on Mossad (Jan 1997) 41471
Turkey (Jun 1997) 41715; 41716; (Dec 1997) 41982
UK (Nov 1997) 41937
USA
Adoption of Vanunu by US couple (Oct 1997) 41890
Conversions controversy (Oct 1997) 41889
Extradition of US teenager question (Oct 1997) 41890
Jerusalem suicide bomb condemned (Aug 1997) 41794
Lebanon and Syria policies (Feb 1997) 41517
Netanyahu's visits to USA (Feb 1997) 41517; (Apr 1997) 41614; (Nov 1997) 41937
Palestine Congressional vote on Jerusalem (Jun 1997) 41714
Settlements issue (Feb 1997) 41518; (Mar 1997) 41564–5; (May 1997) 41662; (Sep 1997) 41840
Visit by US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Vatican (Nov 1997) 41937
Foreign trade:
Egypt (Mar 1997) 41566
Jordan (Nov 1997) 41939
Qatar (Mar 1997) 41566
Russia (Mar 1997) 41566
Turkmenistan (Mar 1997) 41566
Knesset: Arab Jerusalem census blocked (Dec 1997) 41981
Labour Party: Leadership (Jun 1997) 41714
Likud:
Defeat of no-confidence motion (Jun 1997) 41714
Electoral primaries abolition proposed (Nov 1997) 41937
Map: (Mar 1997) 41565
Nuclear issues:
Adoption of Vanunu by US couple (Oct 1997) 41890
Compensation for death of worker at Dimona reactor (Oct 1997) 41889–90

ISRAEL (contd)
Obituary of Herzog (former President): (Apr 1997) 41614
President: Talks with Palestinian President (May 1997) 41662
Prime Minister:
Bar-On (Attorney General) appointment corruption scandal (Jan 1997) 41470–1; (Feb 1997) 41518; (Apr 1997) 41613–14; (May 1997) 41662
Comments about left-wing controversy (Oct 1997) 41889
Conversions controversy (Oct 1997) 41889
Dispute with Finance Minister Meridor over finance policy (Jun 1997) 41714
Jerusalem suicide bombing reaction (Aug 1997) 41794
Meetings with
Arafat (Jan 1997) 41469; (Feb 1997) 41518; (Oct 1997) 41890–1
Egyptian President (Feb 1997) 41518
Hussein of Jordan (Feb 1997) 41518; (Apr 1997) 41614
US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41840
Resignation of director-general of PM's office (Nov 1997) 41937
Security department (Jul 1997) 41755
Visits to
Japan (Aug 1997) 41796
Korea, South (Aug 1997) 41796
Russia (Mar 1997) 41566
UK (Nov 1997) 41937
USA (Feb 1997) 41517; (Apr 1997) 41614; (Nov 1997) 41937
Religious affairs:
Conversions controversy (Oct 1997) 41889
Vatican accord (Nov 1997) 41937
Resignations:
Ambassador to Jordan (May 1997) 41662
Attorney General (Jan 1997) 41471
Director-general of Prime Minister's office (Nov 1997) 41937
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41471; (Apr 1997) 41614; (Jun 1997) 41714
Security:
Arrests
Hamas members (Apr 1997) 41614
Palestinian police officers (Aug 1997) 41794
Bombings
Jerusalem (Aug 1997) 41794; (Sep 1997) 41839
Tel Aviv (Jan 1997) 41471; (Mar 1997) 41566; (Apr 1997) 41614
Clash with Palestinian villagers in West Bank (Feb 1997) 41519
Killings, Israeli schoolgirls by Jordanian soldier (Mar 1997) 41566
Mossad (Jan 1997) 41470; 41471; (Sep 1997) 41841; (Oct 1997) 41890
Rabin assassination, Leaking of annex to report concerning role of an Israeli double agent (Nov 1997) 41937
Release of Shaikh Yassin (Oct 1997) 41890
Vanunu, Adopted by US couple (Oct 1997) 41890
Shas: Attorney General appointment allegations (Jan 1997) 41471
Trials:
German on terrorism charges (Dec 1997) 41982
Neeman (former Justice Minister) acquitted (May 1997) 41662
Olmert (campaign financing fraud) (Jan 1997) 41471
US teenager extradition question (Oct 1997) 41890
UN: Resolution on Qana shelling (Lebanon) (Jun 1997) 41715

ISRAELI-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES
see also MIDDLE EAST, Peace process; PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS (WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP)
East Jerusalem:
Har Homa settlement (Feb 1997) 41517–18; (Mar 1997) 41564–5; (Apr 1997) 41614

ISRAELI-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (contd)
Killing of Jewish seminary student (Nov 1997) 41940
Settlements:
Clashes between settlers and Israeli troops (May 1997) 41662
Har Homa (Feb 1997) 41517–18; (Mar 1997) 41564–5; (Apr 1997) 41614
Ras al-Amud (Sep 1997) 41840
US report (May 1997) 41662
UN: General Assembly resolution on settlement activity (Apr 1997) 41614; (Aug 1997) 41795
West Bank:
Clashes (Mar 1997) 41564–5; (Apr 1997) 41614–15
Military redeployment issue (Nov 1997) 41940; (Dec 1997) 41981

ITALY
Assisi: Earthquakes and tremors (Sep 1997) 41829; (Oct 1997) 41883
Berlusconi, Silvio: Bribery and corruption charges (Jan 1997) 41465; (Dec 1997) 41972
Communist Refoundation (RC):
Albanian crisis (Apr 1997) 41596
European monetary union (Apr 1997) 41598
Local elections (Apr 1997) 41598; (Nov 1997) 41928
Opposition to budget (Oct 1997) 41883
Constitution:
Constitutional Court (Jan 1997) 41465
Constitutional reform commission (Jan 1997) 41465; (Jun 1997) 41697; (Jul 1997) 41743–4
Royal heirs right of return (Apr 1997) 41598
Corruption:
see also Trials
Berlusconi, Silvio (Jan 1997) 41465; (Dec 1997) 41972
Fiat executives (Apr 1997) 41598
Judicial reform bill to tackle backlog of corruption cases (Jan 1997) 41465–6
Defence:
Armed forces
see also UN
Albanian peacekeeping force (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (Jul 1997) 41747; (Aug 1997) 41789
Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Drugs: Mafia (Mar 1997) 41559
Earthquakes: (Sep 1997) 41829; (Oct 1997) 41883
Economy:
see also European Union (EU)
Agriculture (Jan 1997) 41466; (Mar 1997) 41559
Bank of Italy (Jan 1997) 41466; (Mar 1997) 41559; (Dec 1997) 41972
Budget (Mar 1997) 41559; (May 1997) 41650; (Sep 1997) 41828; (Oct 1997) 41883; (Dec 1997) 41972
Deficit (Apr 1997) 41598
Interest rates (Jan 1997) 41466; (Jun 1997) 41697–8; (Dec 1997) 41972
Pension reform (Oct 1997) 41883; (Nov 1997) 41928
Three-year strategy (May 1997) 41650
Trade unions (Nov 1997) 41928
Unemployment (Mar 1997) 41559
Elections:
Local (Apr 1997) 41598; (May 1997) 41650; (Nov 1997) 41928
Senate, Di Pietro (Nov 1997) 41928
European Union (EU):
Dairy farming (Jan 1997) 41466; (Mar 1997) 41559
Environmental fines (Jan 1997) 41468
Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Rice quotas set by EU (Jan 1997) 41469
Single currency (Jan 1997) 41466; (Feb 1997) 41512–13; (Mar 1997) 41559; (Apr 1997) 41598; (May 1997) 41650; (Sep 1997) 41828; (Oct 1997) 41883; (Nov 1997) 41928
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41557; 41558; (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (May 1997) 41654; (Aug 1997) 41789–90; (Dec 1997) 41979
Ethiopia (Dec 1997) 41949

ITALY (contd)
Hungary (May 1997) 41655
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Russia (Nov 1997) 41928
Slovenia (May 1997) 41655
Turkey, Kurdish refugees (Dec 1997) 41973
Forza Italia:
see also Berlusconi, Silvio
Constitutional reform (Jan 1997) 41465
Freedom Alliance:
Albanian crisis (Apr 1997) 41596
Constitutional reform (Jan 1997) 41465
Local elections (May 1997) 41650
Friuli and the Veneto movement: (Feb 1997) 41513
Mafia:
see also Trials: Andreotti, Falcone assassination
Anti-Mafia operations (Mar 1997) 41559
Arrests of Sicilian Cosa Nostra leaders (Jun 1997) 41697
Troops deployed in Naples (Jul 1997) 41744
Naples: Troops deployed (Jul 1997) 41744
National Alliance (AN):
Constitutional reform (Jan 1997) 41465
Local elections (Apr 1997) 41598
Northern League (LN):
Assembly (Nov 1997) 41928
Bossi indicted (Jun 1997) 41697
Constitutional reform (Jun 1997) 41697
Local elections (Apr 1997) 41598; (May 1997) 41650
"Padania"
"Elections" (Oct 1997) 41883
Referendum claims (May 1997) 41650
Party congress (Feb 1997) 41513
Secessionist rallies (Sep 1997) 41829
Obituary of Mussolini's son: (Jun 1997) 41698
Olive Tree alliance:
Albanian crisis (Apr 1997) 41596
Budget (Sep 1997) 41828
Constitutional reform (Jan 1997) 41465; (Jun 1997) 41697
Di Pietro's election to Senate (Nov 1997) 41928
European monetary union plans (Mar 1997) 41559; (Apr 1997) 41598; (Sep 1997) 41828
Government crisis (Oct 1997) 41883
Local elections (Apr 1997) 41598; (May 1997) 41650; (Nov 1997) 41928
Party of the Democratic Left (PDS):
Constitutional reform (Jan 1997) 41465
Local elections (Apr 1997) 41598
Party congress (Feb 1997) 41513
President: Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Prime Minister:
Andreotti trial (Aug 1997) 41783
Court ruling that Prodi should not stand trial (Dec 1997) 41972
Economic programme (May 1997) 41650
Meetings with, Slovenian and Hungarian Prime Ministers (May 1997) 41655
Visit to Albania (Apr 1997) 41596
Referendum: Low turnout (Jun 1997) 41697
Refounded Communists (RC): *see* Communist Refoundation Party
Refugees:
Deportation of Albanians (Dec 1997) 41979
From Albania (Mar 1997) 41558; (May 1997) 41654
Kurds from Turkey (Dec 1997) 41973
Resignations: Judge in Berlusconi trial (Jan 1997) 41465
Security:
see also Mafia
Albanian refugee crisis (Mar 1997) 41558
Bombings (Apr 1997) 41598
Farmers' protests (Jan 1997) 41466
Freihetlichen separatist group (Aug 1997) 41783
Northern pro- and anti-secession rallies (Sep 1997) 41829
Red Brigade leader's return (Jul 1997) 41744
Venetian separatists' actions (May 1997) 41650; (Jul 1997) 41744
Supreme Court: Left-wing militants' sentences upheld (Jan 1997) 41466
Trials:

ITALY (contd)
see also Corruption; Mafia
Andreotti (Aug 1997) 41783
Berlusconi, Paolo (Jan 1997) 41465
Berlusconi, Silvio and others on bribery charges (Jan 1997) 41465; (Dec 1997) 41972
Bossi (Jun 1997) 41697
Falcone assassination (Sep 1997) 41828–9
Fiat executives (Apr 1997) 41598
Prodi ruling (Dec 1997) 41972
Rainer for murder of fellow German-speaking separatist (Aug 1997) 41783
Venetian separatists sentenced (Jul 1997) 41744
UN: Somalia peacekeepers torture allegations (Jun 1997) 41697; (Aug 1997) 41783
War crimes:
Apology to Ethiopia (Dec 1997) 41949
Priebke (Feb 1997) 41522; (Jul 1997) 41757

J

JAMAICA
Drugs: Anti-trafficking agreement with USA (May 1997) 41635
Elections: (Dec 1997) 41956
Foreign relations:
USA (May 1997) 41635
Venezuela (Nov 1997) 41907
Obituary of Manley: (Mar 1997) 41536–7
People's National Party (PNP): (Mar 1997) 41536–7; (Dec 1997) 41956
Political parties: (Dec 1997) 41956
Security: Killing of Venezuelan ambassador (Nov 1997) 41907

JAPAN
AIDS: (Mar 1997) 41539
Appointments: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41815
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN): (Jan 1997) 41445
Cabinet: (Sep 1997) 41815
Constitution: Yasukuni Shrine donations ruling (Apr 1997) 41592
Corruption:
Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank (DKB) (Jun 1997) 41688; (Jul 1997) 41736
Daiwa Securities Co. (Sep 1997) 41816; (Dec 1997) 41959
Fujinami (Mar 1997) 41539
Hashimoto sex scandal allegations (Dec 1997) 41960
Izui (Jan 1997) 41444–5; (Feb 1997) 41497; (Sep 1997) 41815; (Dec 1997) 41960
Mitsubishi Motors Corp. (Oct 1997) 41862
Nikko Securities (Oct 1997) 41862; (Dec 1997) 41959
Nomura (Mar 1997) 41539; (Apr 1997) 41592; (May 1997) 41640; (Jun 1997) 41687–8; (Jul 1997) 41736; (Sep 1997) 41816; (Oct 1997) 41862
Okamitsu (former health minister) (Mar 1997) 41539
Sato, Resignation from Cabinet over 1976 Lockheed scandal (Sep 1997) 41815
Sokaiya (crime syndicates) scandal (Oct 1997) 41862; (Dec 1997) 41959
Sumitomo copper scandal (Jan 1997) 41445; (Feb 1997) 41497
Tomobe (member of House of Councillors) (Feb 1997) 41497
Yamaichi Securities Co. (Jul 1997) 41736; (Sep 1997) 41816
Defence:
see also Foreign relations: USA
Landmines (Sep 1997) 41845
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ):
Izui corruption allegations (Dec 1997) 41960
Leadership system (Sep 1997) 41815
Disasters: Mud avalanche (Jul 1997) 41736
Economy:
see also Corruption
Administrative reform council report (Aug 1997) 41771–2
Bank of Japan (Feb 1997) 41496–7; (Nov 1997) 41908
Bankruptcies

JAPAN (contd)
All Corp (Jan 1997) 41445
Hokkaido Takushoku bank (Nov 1997) 41908
Nissan Mutual Life insurance company (Apr 1997) 41592
Sanyo Securities (Nov 1997) 41908
Yamaichi Securities Co. (Nov 1997) 41908; 41910
"Big bang" (Jun 1997) 41688; (Jul 1997) 41736
Budget (Mar 1997) 41540; (Dec 1997) 41959
Budget deficit (Jan 1997) 41444
Emergency measures (Oct 1997) 41862; (Dec 1997) 41959
Expenditure reduction proposals approved (Jun 1997) 41688
Financial crisis (Nov 1997) 41908; (Dec 1997) 41959
Financial reform initiatives (Feb 1997) 41496–7; (Jun 1997) 41688
Stock market falls (Oct 1997) 41861; (Dec 1997) 41959
Taxation (Jan 1997) 41444; (Apr 1997) 41592; (Dec 1997) 41959
Tokyo City Bank collapse (Nov 1997) 41908
Trade surpluses (Mar 1997) 41540
Trade unions (Mar 1997) 41540
Education: School textbooks ruling (Aug 1997) 41771
Elections: Tokyo metropolitan assembly (Jul 1997) 41736
Environment:
Oil spills (Jan 1997) 41475; (Jul 1997) 41736–7
Whaling (Oct 1997) 41892
Foreign relations:
Australia (Apr 1997) 41591
Cambodia (Jul 1997) 41734
China
Fisheries agreement (Nov 1997) 41909
Germ warfare lawsuit against Japan (Aug 1997) 41771
Hashimoto
Tour of ASEAN countries (Jan 1997) 41445
Visit to China (Sep 1997) 41816
Islands dispute (May 1997) 41640
Japanese grant aid resumed (Mar 1997) 41541
Li Peng's visit to Japan (Nov 1997) 41909
US-Japan defence co-operation guidelines (Jun 1997) 41687; (Aug 1997) 41771
Cuba (Mar 1997) 41533
Dominican Republic (Mar 1997) 41533
Hong Kong (May 1997) 41640
Israel (Aug 1997) 41796
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Korea, North (Feb 1997) 41494; (Aug 1997) 41772; (Sep 1997) 41816; (Oct 1997) 41862; (Nov 1997) 41910
Korea, South, Comfort women compensation (Jan 1997) 41445
Lebanon (Feb 1997) 41519; (Mar 1997) 41566–7; (Jun 1997) 41715; (Nov 1997) 41937
New Zealand (Apr 1997) 41591
Peru (Jan 1997) 41438–9; (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41582; (May 1997) 41632
Russia
Informal summit (Nov 1997) 41908–9
Northern Territories islands dispute (May 1997) 41640; (Jun 1997) 41687; (Nov 1997) 41909
Taiwan, Islands dispute (May 1997) 41640
USA
Bases question (Apr 1997) 41591
Burma sanctions dispute (Feb 1997) 41501
Defence co-operation guidelines (Jun 1997) 41687; (Aug 1997) 41771; (Sep 1997) 41816
Hashimoto's visit to USA (Apr 1997) 41591
Okinawa heliport referendum (Dec 1997) 41959
Uranium bullets fired in error in Okinawa (Feb 1997) 41497
Foreign trade:
Burma (Feb 1997) 41501
Taiwan (Feb 1997) 41494

JAPAN (contd)
USA
Initiative on deregulation (Jun 1997) 41687
Shipping dispute (Feb 1997) 41497–8; (Mar 1997) 41540; (Apr 1997) 41591–2; (Sep 1997) 41816; (Oct 1997) 41862
Trade surplus issue (Mar 1997) 41540
Vietnam (Jan 1997) 41451
Hokkaido: Ainu people (Mar 1997) 41539–40; (May 1997) 41640
Japanese Communist Party (JCP): Tokyo elections (Jul 1997) 41736
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP):
Cabinet appointments (Sep 1997) 41815
Co-operation with Shinshinto (Jun 1997) 41687
Emergency economic measures (Oct 1997) 41862
Financial crisis proposals (Nov 1997) 41908
Hashimoto re-elected LDP president (Sep 1997) 41815
Holding companies ban to be lifted (Feb 1997) 41497
Izui corruption allegations (Dec 1997) 41960
Legislative majority restored (Sep 1997) 41815
Shinshinto agreement on US bases land-lease legislation (Apr 1997) 41591
Tokyo elections (Jul 1997) 41736
Map: (May 1997) 41640
Minority rights: Ainu (Mar 1997) 41539–40; (May 1997) 41640
Nuclear issues:
Allegations of mismanagement within industry (Apr 1997) 41592
Closure of Fugen reactor (Apr 1997) 41592
Explosion at nuclear fuel reprocessing plant (Mar 1997) 41539; (Apr 1997) 41592
Plans for new power station scrapped (Mar 1997) 41539
Radioactive leak reported at Tokalmura plant (Aug 1997) 41772
Okinawa:
Referendum on heliport (Dec 1997) 41959
Resignation of mayor (Dec 1997) 41959
US bases dispute (Apr 1997) 41591
US firing of uranium bullets in error (Feb 1997) 41497
Political parties: (Jul 1997) 41736
Prime Minister:
Meetings with
Chinese Premier (Nov 1997) 41909
Peru President (Jan 1997) 41438
Russian President (Nov 1997) 41909
US President (Apr 1997) 41591
Policy speech (Jan 1997) 41444
Visits to
ASEAN countries (Jan 1997) 41445
Australia (Apr 1997) 41591
China (Sep 1997) 41816
New Zealand (Apr 1997) 41591
Peru (May 1997) 41632
USA (Apr 1997) 41591
Public Securities Commission (PSI): (Feb 1997) 41497
Religious affairs:
see also Security
Yasukuni Shrine donations ruling (Apr 1997) 41592
Resignations:
Hosokawa from Shinshinto (Jun 1997) 41687
Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41815
Nago mayor (Okinawa) (Dec 1997) 41959
Peru ambassador (May 1997) 41632
Sakigake (New Party Harbinger):
Holding companies ban to be lifted (Feb 1997) 41497
Political alliances (Apr 1997) 41591
Security:
Aum Shinrikyo cult, Public Securities Commission (PSI) decision not to outlaw (Feb 1997) 41497
Crackdown on crime syndicates (Sep 1997) 41816
Intelligence agency (Jan 1997) 41444
Shinshinto:
Agreement with LDP on US bases land-lease legislation (Apr 1997) 41591

JAPAN (contd)
Dissolution (Dec 1997) 41959
Resignation of Hosokawa (Jun 1997) 41687
Tokyo elections (Jul 1997) 41736
Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ):
Holding companies ban to be lifted (Feb 1997) 41497
Izui corruption allegations (Dec 1997) 41960
Political alliances (Apr 1997) 41591
Supreme Court rulings:
School textbooks (Aug 1997) 41771
Yasukuni Shrine donations (Apr 1997) 41592
Tokyo: Elections (Jul 1997) 41736
Trials:
Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank (DKB) (Jul 1997) 41736
Fujinami sentenced (Mar 1997) 41539
Hamanaka (Sumitomo chief) (Jan 1997) 41445
HIV-infected blood scandal (Mar 1997) 41539
Okamitsu (former health minister) (Mar 1997) 41539
War crimes:
Apology to China (Sep 1997) 41816
Chinese lawsuit over germ warfare (Aug 1997) 41771
Comfort women payment (Jan 1997) 41445
Supreme Court ruling on school textbooks (Aug 1997) 41771

JORDAN
see also MIDDLE EAST
Appointments:
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41566
Senate (Nov 1997) 41936–7
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41566
Economy: Debt to USA write-off agreed (Sep 1997) 41841
Elections:
Legislative
Boycott planned (Jul 1997) 41755; (Aug 1997) 41796; (Nov 1997) 41936
Results (Nov 1997) 41936–7
Foreign relations:
Canada (Sep 1997) 41841
Czech Republic (Sep 1997) 41831
Iraq (Dec 1997) 41982
Israel
Attack on Israeli embassy (Sep 1997) 41841
Condemnation of Jerusalem suicide bombing (Aug 1997) 41794
Helicopter crash deaths condolences (Feb 1997) 41517
Killing of Israeli schoolgirls by Jordanian soldier (Mar 1997) 41566; (Jun 1997) 41714–15; (Jul 1997) 41755
Mossad involvement in failed assassination of Hamas official alleged (Sep 1997) 41841; (Oct 1997) 41890
Release of Shakh Yassin (Oct 1997) 41890
Resignation of Israeli ambassador to Jordan (May 1997) 41662
Settlements issue (Feb 1997) 41518
Trade fair protests (Jan 1997) 41472
Water supplies dispute (May 1997) 41662
USA (Sep 1997) 41839–40; 41841
Foreign trade:
Iraq (Dec 1997) 41982
Israel (Nov 1997) 41939
Hamas: Visit of Abu Marzuk following deportation from USA (May 1997) 41663
Islamic Action Front (IAF): (Jul 1997) 41755; (Aug 1997) 41796
Jordanian Nationalist Democratic Front: (May 1997) 41663
King Hussein:
Dissolution of parliament (Aug 1997) 41796
Legislative elections (Nov 1997) 41936
Meetings with Israel Prime Minister (Feb 1997) 41518; (Apr 1997) 41614
Media: (May 1997) 41663; (Jul 1997) 41755
Muslim Brotherhood: (Jul 1997) 41755; (Aug 1997) 41796
Security:
Arrest of Hamas official (Sep 1997) 41841
Assassination attempt against Hamas official (Sep 1997) 41841; (Oct 1997) 41890
Attack on Israeli embassy (Sep 1997) 41841

JORDAN (contd)
Demonstrations over Israeli trade fair (Jan 1997) 41472
Trials: Soldier accused of shooting Israeli schoolgirls (Jun 1997) 41714–15; (Jul 1997) 41755

K

KASHMIR
All-Party Hurriyet Conference (APHC) (separatist alliance): (Sep 1997) 41820
India-Pakistan relations:
Exchanges of fire on line of control (Aug 1997) 41775; (Sep 1997) 41819; (Oct 1997) 41865
Talks (Jun 1997) 41691; (Sep 1997) 41819; (Dec 1997) 41965
Visit of Queen Elizabeth II (Oct 1997) 41865
Security:
Arrests (Sep 1997) 41820
Hizbul Mujahedeen guerrilla group (Mar 1997) 41544
Jammat-ul-mojahedin (Jan 1997) 41448
Killings
Guerrilla leader (Mar 1997) 41544
Militants (Jul 1997) 41740
Security force abuses alleged (Sep 1997) 41820
Separatist violence (Jan 1997) 41448; (Sep 1997) 41820

KAZAKHSTAN
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments:
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41693; (Oct 1997) 41867
National Security Committee chairman (May 1997) 41636
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41542; (Jun 1997) 41693; (Oct 1997) 41867
Capital:
Postponement of transfer from Alma-Ata to Akmola (Oct 1997) 41867
Presidential flag hoisted in Akmola (Nov 1997) 41912
Corruption: Prime Minister Kazhageldin exonerated (Aug 1997) 41774; (Oct 1997) 41867
Defence:
Joint US-Russia-Kazakhstan military exercises (Sep 1997) 41818
US co-operation accord (Nov 1997) 41912
Economy:
Foreign investment law (Mar 1997) 41542
Petroleum (Mar 1997) 41542; (Oct 1997) 41867; (Nov 1997) 41912
Wage arrears (Oct 1997) 41867
Foreign relations:
China (Apr 1997) 41589; (Sep 1997) 41818
Russia (Sep 1997) 41818; (Oct 1997) 41867
USA (Sep 1997) 41818; (Nov 1997) 41912
Foreign trade:
Turkey (Oct 1997) 41867
USA (Nov 1997) 41912
Language law: (Jul 1997) 41738
Media: Abolition of state news agency (Sep 1997) 41818
President:
Central Asian summit (Jul 1997) 41741
Restructuring of government (Mar 1997) 41542; (Oct 1997) 41867
Visit to USA (Nov 1997) 41912
Prime Minister:
Balgymbayev, Appointment (Oct 1997) 41867
Kazhageldin, Exonerated over corruption charges (Aug 1997) 41774
Resignations: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41867
Security:
Demonstrations (Oct 1997) 41867
Imprisonment of opposition leader (Sep 1997) 41818
National Security Committee (KNB) (May 1997) 41636
Workers' Movement: Alma-Ata committee (Sep 1997) 41818

KENYA
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41432

KENYA (contd)
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41432
Constitution:
Amendments (Nov 1997) 41900–1
Pressure on President to honour reform package (Oct 1997) 41851
Review promised (Jul 1997) 41720
Corruption: Biwott return to government (Jan 1997) 41432
Democratic Party (DP): (Dec 1997) 41949
Economy:
Budget (Jun 1997) 41674
IMF loan (Aug 1997) 41762
Teachers' salary demands (Oct 1997) 41851–2
World Bank (Aug 1997) 41762
Elections:
Polling extended (Dec 1997) 41949
Preparations for (May 1997) 41627; (Sep 1997) 41805; (Nov 1997) 41900–1
FORD-Asili:
Arrest of leader (May 1997) 41627
Election boycott plan (Nov 1997) 41901
Opposition to strike call (Aug 1997) 41762
Postponement of unlicensed rallies (Jun 1997) 41674
FORD-Kenya:
Arrest of leader (May 1997) 41627
Opposition to strike call (Aug 1997) 41762
Postponement of unlicensed rallies (Jun 1997) 41674
Foreign relations:
Austria (Apr 1997) 41578
Belgium (Apr 1997) 41578
Denmark (Apr 1997) 41578
Finland (Apr 1997) 41578
Germany (Apr 1997) 41578
Italy (Apr 1997) 41578
Japan (Apr 1997) 41578
Netherlands (Apr 1997) 41578
Norway (Apr 1997) 41578
Portugal (Apr 1997) 41578
Somalia (May 1997) 41627
Spain (Apr 1997) 41578
Sudan (May 1997) 41627
Sweden (Apr 1997) 41578
UK (Apr 1997) 41578
USA (Apr 1997) 41578
Human rights:
Killing of student leader (Feb 1997) 41483
Police brutality criticised by foreign envoys (Apr 1997) 41578–9
Torture allegations (Jan 1997) 41432
Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK): Return of leader (Jul 1997) 41720
Kenya African National Union (KANU):
Accused of election rigging (Dec 1997) 41949
Moves towards party democracy (Jan 1997) 41432
Repeal of laws giving KANU electoral advantage promised (Jul 1997) 41720
Youth wing (Jan 1997) 41432
Media: (Sep 1997) 41805
National Convention Executive Council (NCEC) (opposition grouping):
Pressure for reform (Sep 1997) 41805
Rally broken up by police (Oct 1997) 41851
Strike call (Aug 1997) 41762
National Development Party: (May 1997) 41627; (Dec 1997) 41949
President:
Concessions on constitutional review (Jul 1997) 41720
Dissolution of legislature (Nov 1997) 41900–1
IGAD chair (Jul 1997) 41725
Religious affairs:
see also Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK)
Police attack on Nairobi cathedral (Jul 1997) 41720
Safina party:
Arrests (May 1997) 41627
Refusal of registration (Oct 1997) 41851
Registration (Nov 1997) 41901
Security:
Arrests of opposition leaders (May 1997) 41627; (Oct 1997) 41851
Demonstrations and violence (May 1997) 41627; (Jun 1997) 41674; (Jul 1997) 41720; (Aug 1997) 41762; (Sep 1997) 41805; (Oct 1997) 41851
Election violence (Dec 1997) 41949
Killings
Pro-democracy demonstrators (Jul 1997) 41720
Student leader (Feb 1997) 41483
Police disruption of opposition gatherings (Apr 1997) 41578; (May 1997) 41627; (Oct 1997) 41851
Strikes (Oct 1997) 41851–2
Student protests (Feb 1997) 41483; (Jul 1997) 41720
Tourists attacked (Sep 1997) 41805
Violence in coastal towns (Aug 1997) 41762; (Sep 1997) 41805

KIRGIZSTAN *see* KYRGYZSTAN

KOREA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF (North Korea)
see also KOREA, NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS
Appointments: Military and political (Apr 1997) 41593
Arms sales to:
Iran (Jun 1997) 41689
Syria (Jun 1997) 41689
Death penalty: (Nov 1997) 41910–11
Defections:
see also KOREA, NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS
Hwang (Feb 1997) 41494–5; (Mar 1997) 41538–9; (Apr 1997) 41593; (May 1997) 41642
Defence:
Conscription criteria (May 1997) 41642
Deaths of defence ministers (Feb 1997) 41495
Deployment of missiles (Apr 1997) 41593
Dismissals:
Military and political (Apr 1997) 41593
Premier of State Administrative Council (Feb 1997) 41495
Economy:
Asian Finance and Investment Corporation (AFIC) investment fund plan (Sep 1997) 41817
Decline (Mar 1997) 41539
Nuclear energy *see* KOREA, NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS, Nuclear issues
Famine:
Admission of low grain stocks (Feb 1997) 41495
Cannibalism allegations (Oct 1997) 41862
Delivery of food aid (Jun 1997) 41689
Drought impact (Aug 1997) 41772; (Sep 1997) 41816–17
Execution of agriculture secretary (Nov 1997) 41910–11
Failure to agree aid with South Korea (Dec 1997) 41958–9
Food aid agreements (May 1997) 41641; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Oct 1997) 41862
Warnings of disaster (Mar 1997) 41539; (Jul 1997) 41737
World Food Programme appeal (Apr 1997) 41593; (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Jul 1997) 41737
Foreign relations:
China
see also KOREA, NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS, Four country talks
Food aid (Jul 1997) 41737
Hwang's defection via Beijing embassy (Feb 1997) 41494–5; (Mar 1997) 41538–9
European Union (EU) (May 1997) 41641
Iran (Jun 1997) 41689
Japan (Feb 1997) 41494; (Aug 1997) 41772; (Sep 1997) 41816; (Oct 1997) 41862; (Nov 1997) 41910
Syria (Jun 1997) 41689
Taiwan, Nuclear waste deal (Mar 1997) 41541
USA
Bilateral talks (Mar 1997) 41538; (Nov 1997) 41910
Food aid negotiations (Feb 1997) 41495; (Apr 1997) 41593; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Sep 1997) 41817
Four country talks proposals (Feb 1997) 41495; (Mar 1997) 41538; (Apr 1997) 41593–4; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Aug 1997) 41772; (Sep 1997) 41817; (Nov 1997) 41911; (Dec 1997) 41959
MIA issues (May 1997) 41641
Military manoeuvres allegations (Jun 1997) 41689
Missile talks (Jun 1997) 41689
New York briefing sessions (Feb 1997) 41495; (Mar 1997) 41538
Human rights: (Aug 1997) 41772
Kim Il Sung mourning period ended: (Jul 1997) 41737
Kim Jong Il:
Election as KWP secretary-general (Oct 1997) 41862
Steps towards accession (Sep 1997) 41816
Korean Workers' Party (KWP):
Provincial conference (Sep 1997) 41816
Secretary-general (Oct 1997) 41862
Nuclear issues:
Nuclear waste deal with Taiwan (Mar 1997) 41541
Weapons allegations (May 1997) 41642
Obituaries: Defence ministers (Feb 1997) 41495
UN:
Return of abducted South Korean farmers (Oct 1997) 41863
World Food Programme famine relief appeal (Apr 1997) 41593; (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Jul 1997) 41737

KOREA, NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS
Air space meeting: (Mar 1997) 41538; (Oct 1997) 41863
Arrests of spies by South Korean Agency for National Security Planning (NSP): (Nov 1997) 41911
Defection of religious leader to North: (Aug 1997) 41773
Defections from the North:
Assistance for defectors by South Korean government (Jul 1997) 41737
Diplomats (Aug 1997) 41772–3
Families rescued from Yellow Sea (May 1997) 41641–2
Hwang (senior official) (Feb 1997) 41494–5; (Mar 1997) 41538–9; (Apr 1997) 41593; (May 1997) 41642
Killing of defector in Seoul (Feb 1997) 41495
Demilitarised Zone (DMZ):
Abduction of South Korean farmers (Oct 1997) 41863
Skirmishes (Apr 1997) 41594; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Sep 1997) 41817
Espionage: (Feb 1997) 41494; (Aug 1997) 41773; (Nov 1997) 41911
Food aid for North: (Feb 1997) 41495; (Apr 1997) 41593; (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Dec 1997) 41958–9
Four country talks proposals: (Feb 1997) 41495; (Mar 1997) 41538; (Apr 1997) 41593–4; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Aug 1997) 41772; (Sep 1997) 41817; (Nov 1997) 41911; (Dec 1997) 41959
Media: Journalists from South visit North (Sep 1997) 41817
Military manoeuvres allegations: (Jun 1997) 41689
Naval clash: (Jun 1997) 41689
Nuclear issues: KEDO consortium (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Aug 1997) 41772
Telephone links between North and South: (Aug 1997) 41772

KOREA, REPUBLIC OF (South Korea)
see also KOREA, NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS
Appointments:
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41496; (Mar 1997) 41537; (Aug 1997) 41773; (Nov 1997) 41909

KOREA, REPUBLIC OF (South Korea) (contd)
NKP leadership (Mar 1997) 41537
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41537; (Aug 1997) 41773
Chemical weapons: (Aug 1997) 41797
Constitution:
Opposition alliance agreement on future revision plans (Nov 1997) 41910
Same-name marriages ruling (Jul 1997) 41737
Corruption:
Bank of Seoul former president imprisoned (Feb 1997) 41496
Banks (Jan 1997) 41444; (Feb 1997) 41496
Election (1992) spending controversy (May 1997) 41641
Hanbo chaebol (Jan 1997) 41444; (Feb 1997) 41495–6; (Mar 1997) 41537–8; (Apr 1997) 41592–3; (Jun 1997) 41688; (Oct 1997) 41863
Kim Dae Jung (Oct 1997) 41863
Kim Hyun Chul (son of President) (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41688; (Oct 1997) 41863
Presidential pardon for business leaders (Sep 1997) 41817
Defence:
Arms deal with France (Oct 1997) 41863
Landmines (Sep 1997) 41845
Democratic Party: (Nov 1997) 41910
Dismissals: Presidential advisers (Feb 1997) 41496
Economy:
Aid package for banks (Aug 1997) 41773
Bank of Korea (Nov 1997) 41909
Banking (Jan 1997) 41444; (Feb 1997) 41496; (Apr 1997) 41593; (Jul 1997) 41738; (Aug 1997) 41773; (Dec 1997) 41958
Bankruptcies
Hanbo (Jan 1997) 41444; (Feb 1997) 41495–6; (Jul 1997) 41738; (Nov 1997) 41909
Sammi (Mar 1997) 41538; (Jul 1997) 41738; (Nov 1997) 41909
Commission on restructuring of financial industry (Jan 1997) 41444; (Apr 1997) 41593
Debt (Nov 1997) 41909–10; (Dec 1997) 41958
Emergency stabilisation package (Nov 1997) 41909–10; (Dec 1997) 41957–8
Financial crisis (Oct 1997) 41863; (Nov 1997) 41909–10; (Dec 1997) 41957–8
IMF (Nov 1997) 41909–10; (Dec 1997) 41957–8
Jinro group difficulties (May 1997) 41593; (Nov 1997) 41909
Kia Group difficulties (Jul 1997) 41738; (Aug 1997) 41773; (Oct 1997) 41863–4; (Nov 1997) 41909; 41910erratum
Korea Asset Management Corporation (KAMC) (Aug 1997) 41773
Labour law (Jan 1997) 41443–4; (Mar 1997) 41537–8
Stock exchange (Oct 1997) 41864; (Nov 1997) 41909–10; (Dec 1997) 41957–8
Trade unions (Jan 1997) 41443; (Mar 1997) 41537–8; (Oct 1997) 41863
Elections:
Presidential
Candidates (May 1997) 41641; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Aug 1997) 41773; (Sep 1997) 41817; (Oct 1997) 41863; (Nov 1997) 41910
Results (Dec 1997) 41958
Esplonage: Arrest of US arms dealer (May 1997) 41641
Foreign relations:
Cambodia (Nov 1997) 41917
Israel (Aug 1997) 41796
Japan, Comfort women compensation (Jan 1997) 41445
Philippines (Mar 1997) 41539
Russia (Aug 1997) 41773
USA
Arrest of US arms dealer (May 1997) 41641
Financial crisis (Nov 1997) 41909–10
Foreign trade:
France (Oct 1997) 41863
Indonesia (Nov 1997) 41918
OECD (Jan 1997) 41444; (Nov 1997) 41909
Taiwan (Feb 1997) 41494
Ukraine (Sep 1997) 41838
National Congress for New Politics (NCNP):

KOREA, REPUBLIC OF (South Korea) (contd)
Alliance with ULD (Nov 1997) 41910
Corruption allegations against Kim Dae Jung (Oct 1997) 41863
Labour law discussions (Jan 1997) 41443–4
Presidential candidate (May 1997) 41641; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Oct 1997) 41863
Presidential victory for Kim Dae Jung (Dec 1997) 41958
New Korea Party (NKP):
Appointments (Mar 1997) 41537; (Aug 1997) 41773
Defections (Nov 1997) 41910
Labour law discussions (Jan 1997) 41443–4
Merger planned with Democratic Party (Nov 1997) 41910
Presidential candidate (Jul 1997) 41737; (Aug 1997) 41773; (Sep 1997) 41817
Resignation of President Kim Young Sam from party (Nov 1997) 41910
Resignations (Oct 1997) 41863
New Party by the People (NPP): (Nov 1997) 41910
President:
Apology for Hanbo (Feb 1997) 41496
Commission on restructuring of financial industry (Jan 1997) 41444
Election (1992) spending controversy (May 1997) 41641
Kim Hyun Chul (son of President Kim Young Sam)
Arrest and trial (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41688; (Oct 1997) 41863
Hanbo scandal evidence and apology (Apr 1997) 41592
Libel suit (Feb 1997) 41496
Labour law defended (Jan 1997) 41443
Meeting with opposition leaders on labour law (Jan 1997) 41443–4
Pardon for former presidents Roh and Chun (Dec 1997) 41958
Victory for Kim Dae Jung (Dec 1997) 41958
Resignations: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41496
Security:
Arrest warrants for union leaders (Jan 1997) 41443
Clashes between police and strikers (Jan 1997) 41443
Industrial unrest (Mar 1997) 41537–8
Killing of North Korean defector in Seoul (Feb 1997) 41495
Kwangju anniversary violence (May 1997) 41641
Strike action response to labour laws (Jan 1997) 41443
Student demonstrations in Seoul (Jun 1997) 41688–9
Supreme Court rulings: Sentence reductions on former presidents upheld (Apr 1997) 41592
Trials:
Hanbo (Mar 1997) 41538; (Apr 1997) 41592–3; (Jun 1997) 41688
Kim Hyun Chul (son of President) (Jun 1997) 41688; (Oct 1997) 41863; (Nov 1997) 41910
United Liberal Democrats (ULD):
Alliance with NCNP (Nov 1997) 41910; (Dec 1997) 41958
Labour law discussions (Jan 1997) 41443–4

KURDS
Iraq-Iran relations: (Jun 1997) 41715
Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP): Co-operation with Turkish armed forces (May 1997) 41651; (Oct 1997) 41877
Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK):
Attacks into Turkey from Iraq bases (May 1997) 41651; (Jun 1997) 41703
Iraqi camps wiped out by Turkish offensive (May 1997) 41652
Relocation of units north towards Black Sea (Oct 1997) 41877
Map: (May 1997) 41652
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK): Rivalry with KDP (May 1997) 41651; (Oct 1997) 41877
Turkey:
Anti-Kurdish offensives (May 1997) 41651–2; (Jun 1997) 41703; 41715; (Oct 1997) 41877

KURDS (contd)
Refugees to Italy (Dec 1997) 41973

KUWAIT
Arms trade with: China (Nov 1997) 41936
Corruption: (Jun 1997) 41716
Foreign relations:
Iran (Jun 1997) 41716
Iraq (Nov 1997) 41938
USA (Nov 1997) 41936
Foreign trade: China (Nov 1997) 41936
National Democratic Rally: (May 1997) 41664
Resignations: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41892
Security: Attempted assassination of MP (Jun 1997) 41716

KYRGYZSTAN
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments:
Deputy Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41589
Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41738; (Oct 1997) 41892
Corruption: (Jan 1997) 41452
Defence: Military co-operation agreement with Russia (Oct 1997) 41867
Dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister: (Apr 1997) 41588–9
Economy:
Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan (Nov 1997) 41912
Investment agency (Nov 1997) 41912
Privatisation programme suspended (Jun 1997) 41694
Erkin Kyrgyzstan Party: (Jan 1997) 41452
Foreign relations:
China (Apr 1997) 41589
Russia
Border guards agreement (Mar 1997) 41542
Military co-operation agreement (Oct 1997) 41867
USA (Jul 1997) 41738
Human rights: (Jun 1997) 41694; (Nov 1997) 41912
Media: (Jun 1997) 41694; (Nov 1997) 41912
President:
Central Asian summit (Jul 1997) 41741
Privatisation programme suspended (Jun 1997) 41694
Visit to USA (Jul 1997) 41738
Security: Demonstrations and violence (Jun 1997) 41694
Trials: Journalists sentenced (Jun 1997) 41694

L

LANDMINES *see* DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

LAOS
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) membership: (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736
Economy: Regional financial crisis (Dec 1997) 41961
Elections: National Assembly (Dec 1997) 41961
Foreign relations: USA (Nov 1997) 41917
Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP): (Dec 1997) 41961
National Assembly:
10th session (Apr 1997) 41594
Elections (Dec 1997) 41961

LATIN AMERICA
see also INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
Andean Group:
Negotiations with Mercosur (Nov 1997) 41907
Withdrawal of Peru (Apr 1997) 41585
South American Common Market (Mercosur):
Brazilian measures on import financing (Apr 1997) 41585
Endorsed by President Clinton (Oct 1997) 41857
Foreign relations: European Union (EU) (Jun 1997) 41683
Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA)

LATIN AMERICA (contd)
discussions (May 1997) 41634; (Jun 1997) 41683; (Oct 1997) 41857
Negotiations with Andean Pact (Nov 1997) 41907
Relations with Caricom (Feb 1997) 41491
Summits (Jun 1997) 41683; (Dec 1997) 41956

LATVIA
see also BALTIC STATES
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41510; (Jun 1997) 41707; (Aug 1997) 41784–5
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41510; (Aug 1997) 41784–5
Christian Democratic Union (KDS): (Aug 1997) 41785
Constitution: Presidential and legislative terms (Dec 1997) 41979
Corruption:
Ministers with outside interests investigated (Jun 1997) 41707; (Jul 1997) 41751; (Sep 1997) 41838–9
Resignation of Defence Minister Krastins (May 1997) 41657; (Jun 1997) 41707
Democratic Party Saimnieks (DPS): (Jan 1997) 41460; (Feb 1997) 41510; (Mar 1997) 41552; (May 1997) 41657; (Aug 1997) 41785; (Oct 1997) 41881
Economy:
Budget (Oct 1997) 41881; (Dec 1997) 41979
IMF (Oct 1997) 41881
Minimum wage increase (Nov 1997) 41924
Reform (Jan 1997) 41460
Elections: Local (Mar 1997) 41552
European Union (EU) membership question: (Dec 1997) 41968
Fatherland and Freedom-LNNK party: (Jun 1997) 41707; (Aug 1997) 41785
For Fatherland and Freedom (TB): (Jan 1997) 41460; (Feb 1997) 41510; (Mar 1997) 41552; (Jun 1997) 41707
Foreign relations: Estonia, Border demarcation completed (Dec 1997) 41976
Foreign trade: European Union (EU) (Mar 1997) 41552
Labour Party: Founding congress (Mar 1997) 41552
Latvian Communist Party (now outlawed):
Release of former leader from prison (Nov 1997) 41924
Latvian Green Party (LZP): (Feb 1997) 41510; (Aug 1997) 41785
Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK): (Feb 1997) 41510; (May 1997) 41657; (Jun 1997) 41707
Latvia's Farmers' Union (LZS): (Feb 1997) 41510; (Mar 1997) 41552; (Aug 1997) 41785
Latvia's Way: (Jan 1997) 41460; (Aug 1997) 41785
National Harmony Party (parliamentary faction): (Sep 1997) 41839
Political parties: (Jan 1997) 41460; (Feb 1997) 41510; (Mar 1997) 41552; (May 1997) 41657; (Jun 1997) 41707; (Sep 1997) 41839
Prime Minister: Resignation and renomination of Skele (Jan 1997) 41460
Resignations:
Ministerial (May 1997) 41657; (Jun 1997) 41707; (Jul 1997) 41751
Prime Minister (Jan 1997) 41460

LEBANON
see also MIDDLE EAST
Drugs: Removal from US narcotics list (Nov 1997) 41937–8
Economy:
Budget (Feb 1997) 41519
Trade unions (Apr 1997) 41615; (May 1997) 41663
Electoral legislation: (May 1997) 41663
Foreign relations:
Czech Republic (Sep 1997) 41831
Iran (Oct 1997) 41888
Israel
see also Hezbollah
Casualty figures (Jan 1997) 41471–2

LEBANON (contd)
Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group (ILMG) (Jan 1997) 41471; (May 1997) 41663
Israeli presence policy debate (Feb 1997) 41517
Jerusalem suicide bomb (Aug 1997) 41794
Lebanese Christians sentenced for contacts with Israeli agents (Nov 1997) 41937
Rocket attack on northern Israel (Jan 1997) 41471
SLA warning to Israel against withdrawal of troops (Oct 1997) 41889
UN Resolution on Qana shelling (Jun 1997) 41715
Withdrawal from Lebanon calls in wake of failed commando raid (Sep 1997) 41840–1; (Oct 1997) 41889; (Nov 1997) 41937
Japan (Feb 1997) 41519; (Mar 1997) 41566–7; (Jun 1997) 41715; (Nov 1997) 41937
Sierra Leone (May 1997) 41626
USA
Lifting of US travel ban (Jul 1997) 41754
Removal from US narcotics list (Nov 1997) 41937–8
Visit by US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Hezbollah:
Attacks on Israeli soldiers (Jan 1997) 41471; (May 1997) 41663; (Jun 1997) 41715; (Jul 1997) 41754; (Oct 1997) 41889
Blamed for attack on southern village (Nov 1997) 41937
Casualty figures (Jan 1997) 41471–2
Civil disobedience "revolution of the hungry" (Bekaa valley) (Jun 1997) 41715; (Jul 1997) 41754; (Nov 1997) 41937; (Dec 1997) 41982
German indicted on terrorism charges in Israeli court (Dec 1997) 41982
Israel operations against
Bombing attacks in Nabatiyah (May 1997) 41663
Deaths of Israelis in failed commando raid and other operations (Sep 1997) 41840–1
Escalation of fighting (Aug 1997) 41795
Guerrilla targets (Feb 1997) 41519; (Jul 1997) 41754
Operation Grapes of Wrath (Jan 1997) 41471–2
Joy at Israeli helicopter crash (Feb 1997) 41517
Kyatyusha rocket attacks on northern Israel (Aug 1997) 41795
Missiles (Apr 1997) 41615
Map: (Feb 1997) 41519
Media:
Aoun broadcast banned (Dec 1997) 41982
Closure of unlicensed radio and TV stations (Sep 1997) 41841
Prime Minister:
Visits to
Iran (Oct 1997) 41888
Japan (Nov 1997) 41937
Religious affairs: Papal visit to Beirut (May 1997) 41663
Security:
see also Hezbollah; South Lebanese Army; Trials
Arrests
Demonstrators over banning of Aoun broadcast (Dec 1997) 41982
Japanese Red Army members (Feb 1997) 41519; (Mar 1997) 41566–7
Labour leader (May 1997) 41663
Attack on American University campus (Oct 1997) 41889
Beirut car-bomb attacks (Aug 1997) 41795
Government troops deployed in Bekaa valley (Nov 1997) 41937
Mortar attack on southern village (Nov 1997) 41937
Papal assassination warnings (May 1997) 41663
South Lebanese Army (SLA):
Arms provisions from Israel (Apr 1997) 41615
Artillery assault on Sidon (Aug 1997) 41795
Casualty figures (Jan 1997) 41471–2
Fighting (Jun 1997) 41715
Shelling of villages (Feb 1997) 41519

LEBANON (contd)
Warning to Israel against withdrawal of Israeli forces (Oct 1997) 41889
Trials:
Geagea (May 1997) 41663; (Dec 1997) 41982
Japanese Red Army members (Mar 1997) 4566–7; (Jun 1997) 41715; (Jul 1997) 41754; (Nov 1997) 41937
Lebanese Christians for Israeli links (Nov 1997) 41937
UN: Resolution on Qana shelling (Jun 1997) 41715

LESOTHO
Basotho Congress Party (BCP): (Mar 1997) 41528; (Apr 1997) 41575; (Jun 1997) 41670; (Aug 1997) 41758; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Dec 1997) 41950
Constitution: (Apr 1997) 41575; (Jun 1997) 41670
Foreign relations: South Africa (Jun 1997) 41670
Ha Reeng Basotho Party dissolution announced: (Dec 1997) 41950
Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD): (Jun 1997) 41670; (Aug 1997) 41758
Prime Minister:
Formation of new political party (Jun 1997) 41670
Stripped of leadership of BCP (Mar 1997) 41528; (Apr 1997) 41575
Security: Police mutiny (Feb 1997) 41479
Suspension of MPs: (Sep 1997) 41803

LIBERIA
Appointments:
Kromah to chair reconciliation commission (Dec 1997) 41945
Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41724; (Aug 1997) 41760
National Security Council (Aug 1997) 41760
Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL): (Jan 1997) 41434
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41724; (Aug 1997) 41760
Council of State:
Resignations of former faction leaders in advance of elections (Mar 1997) 42528
Resumed (Jan 1997) 41434
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):
see also Peace process
ECOMOG commander appointed to National Security Council (Aug 1997) 41760
Election preparations (Feb 1997) 41481–2; (May 1997) 41625
Elections:
Preparations for (Feb 1997) 41481–2; (Mar 1997) 41528; (May 1997) 41625
Victory for Taylor and NPP (Jul 1997) 41724
Foreign relations:
China (Sep 1997) 41814–15
Taiwan (Sep 1997) 41814–15
UK (Mar 1997) 41528
USA (Mar 1997) 41528
Liberian Peace Council (LPC): (Jan 1997) 41434
Lofa Defence Force (LDF): (Jan 1997) 41434
National Commission on Reconciliation: (Dec 1997) 41945
National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL):
Demobilisation process (Jan 1997) 41434; (Mar 1997) 41528
National Patriotic Party (NPP): Electoral victory (Jul 1997) 41724
Peace process:
Disarmament difficulties (Jan 1997) 41434
ECOMOG peacekeeping force
Arrest of former faction fighters (Feb 1997) 41482
Disarmament process (Jan 1997) 41434; (Mar 1997) 41528
Reinforcements from USA and UK (Mar 1997) 42528
Supervision of elections (Jul 1997) 41724
Withdrawal plans (Feb 1997) 41482
Political parties: (Jul 1997) 41724
President:
Taylor
Electoral victory (Jul 1997) 41724
Inauguration (Aug 1997) 41760

LIBERIA (contd)
Security:
Abduction and death of Doike (Dec 1997) 41945
Arrests
Kromah over weapons discovery (Mar 1997) 41528
Special Security Service members for murder of Doike (Dec 1997) 41945
Vigilante groups (Mar 1997) 42528
ULIMO-J faction: (Jan 1997) 41434
UN: Disarmament statistics (Jan 1997) 41434
United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO): Demobilisation process (Jan 1997) 41434

LIBYA
Appointments:
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41568; (Dec 1997) 41983
Prime Minister (Dec 1997) 41983
Arab League:
Easing of UN sanctions urged (Sep 1997) 41843
Wish for expelled Palestinians to return (Jan 1997) 41474
Death penalty: (Jan 1997) 41473–4
Economy: Budget (Dec 1997) 41983
Expulsion of Palestinians: Call for their return (Jan 1997) 41474
Foreign relations:
Egypt (Jan 1997) 41474
Germany (Nov 1997) 41927–8
Niger (May 1997) 41664
Nigeria (May 1997) 41664
South Africa (Jan 1997) 41430; (Jun 1997) 41713; (Oct 1997) 41891
UK, Lockerbie (Jun 1997) 41713; (Oct 1997) 41891; (Dec 1997) 41983
USA
CIA alleged plot to assassinate Kadhafi (May 1997) 41664
CIA involved in alleged espionage case (Jan 1997) 41473
Lockerbie (Jun 1997) 41713; (Oct 1997) 41891
Reaction to violation of UN air embargo (May 1997) 41664
Visit by Farrakhan (Jan 1997) 41474
General People's Committee: (Mar 1997) 41568; (Dec 1997) 41983
General People's Congress (GPC): (Dec 1997) 41983
Kadhafi:
Alleged assassination plot (May 1997) 41664
Visits to
Niger (May 1997) 41664
Nigeria (May 1997) 41664
Lockerbie bombing:
ICJ hearing (Oct 1997) 41891
Mandela's comments (Oct 1997) 41891
Offer to families (Jun 1997) 41712–13
UN report (Dec 1997) 41983
National Front for the Salvation of Libya (exiled opposition group): (Jan 1997) 41474
Security: 1993 coup attempt (Jan 1997) 41473–4
Trials: Espionage cases (Jan 1997) 41473–4
UN:
Air embargo breached (May 1997) 41664
Arab league call to ease sanctions (Sep 1997) 41844
Lockerbie trial report (Dec 1997) 41983

LIECHTENSTEIN
Appointments: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41603
Cabinet: (Apr 1997) 41603
Collapse of government coalition: (Mar 1997) 41554
Elections: (Feb 1997) 41512
Political parties: (Feb 1997) 41512; (Mar 1997) 41554; (Apr 1997) 41603

LITHUANIA
see also BALTIC STATES
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41510
Corruption: Matiliauskas (finance minister) (Feb 1997) 41510
Defence: NATO membership question (Jul 1997) 41756; (Oct 1997) 41881

LITHUANIA (contd)
Economy:
Budget (Dec 1997) 41976
Privatisation (Nov 1997) 41923
Elections:
Local (Mar 1997) 41552
Presidential
Timetable (Jul 1997) 41754
Campaign (Nov 1997) 41924
First round (Dec 1997) 41976
European Union (EU) membership question: (Jul 1997) 41745; (Oct 1997) 41881; (Dec 1997) 41968
Foreign relations: Russia (Oct 1997) 41881; (Nov 1997) 41924
Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives) (TS)(LK): (Mar 1997) 41552
Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP): (Mar 1997) 41552
Political parties: (Mar 1997) 41552
President:
Brazauskas' decision not to stand for re-election (Oct 1997) 41881; (Nov 1997) 41924
Visit to Russia (Oct 1997) 41881
Resignations:
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41510
Prosecutor General (Mar 1997) 41552
War crimes: Gimzauskas indicted (Nov 1997) 41941

LONDON CLUB *see* DEBT

LUSOPHONE STATES *see* AFRICA

LUXEMBOURG, War crimes: Nazi gold contribution offer (Dec 1997) 41984

M

MACAO, Economy: Budget (Oct 1997) 41861

MACEDONIA
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41654
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41654
Constitutional Court: (Jun 1997) 41704
Corruption: Pyramid investment schemes (Apr 1997) 41605; (May 1997) 41654
Dismissals: Central bank governor (May 1997) 41654
Economy:
Agreement on debt of former Yugoslavia (Mar 1997) 41556
Central bank (May 1997) 41654
Compensation for victims of pyramid investment scheme (Apr 1997) 41605
IMF (Apr 1997) 41605
Ethnic minorities: Albanian flag difficulties (May 1997) 41654; (Jun 1997) 41704; (Jul 1997) 41746; (Sep 1997) 41835
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41556; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Oct 1997) 41877
China (Jun 1997) 41704
Greece
Crete summit (Nov 1997) 41934
Negotiations on permanent name (Jun 1997) 41704
Visit by Greek Foreign Minister (Mar 1997) 41556
USA (Jun 1997) 41704
Immigration: Illegal Albanian immigrants (Sep 1997) 41835
Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE): (May 1997) 41654
NATO: Desire for NATO troops to remain in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Jun 1997) 41704
Party of Democratic Prosperity (PDP): (May 1997) 41654
President:
Call for end to ethnic unrest (Jul 1997) 41747
Visits to
China (Jun 1997) 41704
USA (Jun 1997) 41704
Security:

MACEDONIA (contd)
Agreement with Albania (Oct 1997) 41877
Demonstrations against banning of Albanian flag (May 1997) 41654; (Jul 1997) 41747
Killing of Macedonian police officers (Sep 1997) 41835
Opposition rally (May 1997) 41654
Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM): (May 1997) 41654
Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM): (May 1997) 41654
Trials: Gostivar mayor (Sep 1997) 41835
UN: Peacekeeping force (Unpredep) (Apr 1997) 41605

MADAGASCAR
Appointments:
Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41579
Prime Minister (Feb 1997) 41483
AREMA: Structure changes (Dec 1997) 41948
Cabinet: (Apr 1997) 41579
Elections:
Postponement of legislative elections (Jul 1997) 41725
Presidential (Jan 1997) 41435
National Assembly: Extension of mandate (Jul 1997) 41725
Panorama group (opposition grouping): (Oct 1997) 41852
President: Ratsiraka's return (Jan 1997) 41435
Prime Minister: Appointment of Rakotomavo (Feb 1997) 41483

MALAWI
Alliance for Democracy (AFORD): (Apr 1997) 41574; (Jul 1997) 41721
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41623; (Jul 1997) 41721
Banda:
Embezzlement charges (Jan 1997) 41435
Human rights charges (Jul 1997) 41721
Retirement as life president of MCP (Jul 1997) 41721
Obituary (Nov 1997) 41897–8
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41623; (Jul 1997) 41721
Constitution: (Apr 1997) 41574
Corruption: *see* Banda
Economy:
National economic council (Jul 1997) 41721
Public sector strikes (May 1997) 41623
Malawi Congress Party (MCP):
Banda's retirement as life president (Jul 1997) 41721
Ending of parliamentary boycott (Apr 1997) 41574
Obituaries:
Banda (Nov 1997) 41897–8
Minister (Mar 1997) 41528
Security: Strikes (May 1997) 41623
United Democratic Front (UDF): (Apr 1997) 41574

MALAYSIA
Appointments:
Acting Prime Minister (May 1997) 41643
Ministerial (May 1997) 41643
Selangor Chief Minister (May 1997) 41643
Corruption:
Anti-corruption drive (Jun 1997) 41685
Selangor Chief Minister (Apr 1997) 41595; (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41685
UMNO members (Jun 1997) 41685
Economy:
Austerity package (Dec 1997) 41962
Budget (Oct 1997) 41869
Currency difficulties (Jul 1997) 41735; (Sep 1997) 41823; (Oct 1997) 41868–9
Economic crisis council created (Nov 1997) 41917–18
Financial crisis (Sep 1997) 41823; (Oct 1997) 41861; 41868–9; (Dec 1997) 41962
Renong acquisition controversy (Nov 1997) 41918
Soros (international financier) criticised (Sep 1997) 41823; (Oct 1997) 41869

MALAYSIA (contd)
Transport link with Thailand postponed (Dec 1997) 41962
Education: (Oct 1997) 41869
Environment:
Bakun hydroelectric dam project deferred (Oct 1997) 41869
Smog reports (Sep 1997) 41823–4; (Nov 1997) 41918
Foreign relations:
Australia (Apr 1997) 41595; (May 1997) 41643
China (Nov 1997) 41911
Fiji (Sep 1997) 41825
France (Nov 1997) 41917
Singapore (Mar 1997) 41546
Taiwan (Nov 1997) 41911
UK (Sep 1997) 41823
USA (Nov 1997) 41917
Foreign trade: Iran (Sep 1997) 41842
Media: Foreign journalist imprisoned (Sep 1997) 41823
Obituary of Yahaya Ahmet (Proton car company): (Mar 1997) 41546
Prime Minister:
Address to ASEAN (Oct 1997) 41870
Anti-Jewish remarks (Oct 1997) 41869; (Nov 1997) 41917
Government criticised for handling of financial crisis (Sep 1997) 41823; (Oct 1997) 41868–9
Mahathir leave of absence (May 1997) 41643
Visit to Taiwan (Nov 1997) 41911
Resignations: Selangor Chief Minister (Apr 1997) 41595
Sarawak: State of emergency over air pollution due to forest fires (Sep 1997) 41823–4
Selangor: Chief Minister (Apr 1997) 41595; (May 1997) 41643
Sumatra: Air crash (Sep 1997) 41824
United Malays National Organisation (UMNO): (Apr 1997) 41595; (Jun 1997) 41685; (Nov 1997) 41918

MALI
Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA): (Apr 1997) 41577; (Aug 1997) 41760–1
Appointments: Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41761; (Sep 1997) 41804
Cabinet: (Aug 1997) 41761; (Sep 1997) 41804
Corruption: Traore's embezzled funds returned by Swiss banks (Apr 1997) 41578; (Sep 1997) 41804
Death penalty: (Dec 1997) 41944
Elections:
Timetable (Jan 1997) 41433; (Mar 1997) 41529; (May 1997) 41626
Independent National Election Commission (CENI) (Jan 1997) 41433; (Apr 1997) 41577
Annulment of first round (Apr 1997) 41577–8
Postponed (Feb 1997) 41483; (Jun 1997) 41675
Presidential (May 1997) 41626
Re-run of legislative elections (Aug 1997) 41760–1
Foreign relations: Switzerland (Apr 1997) 41578; (Sep 1997) 41804
Front for Change and Democracy (FCD): (Jan 1997) 41433
Human rights: (Sep 1997) 41804
National Assembly: Dissolution (Mar 1997) 41529
Party for Unity, Progress and Democracy (PUDP): (May 1997) 41626
People's Convention Party (CPP): (May 1997) 41626
Political parties: (Aug 1997) 41760–1
President:
Election campaign (Apr 1997) 41577–8
Re-election of Konaré (May 1997) 41626
Prime Minister: Reappointment of Keita (Sep 1997) 41804
Rally of Patriotic Forces (RFP): (Jan 1997) 41433
Resignations: Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41761
Security:
Arrests of opposition leaders (Aug 1997) 41761
Election tensions (May 1997) 41626; (Aug 1997) 41760
Killing of police officer (Aug 1997) 41761

MALI (contd)
Traore:
Embezzled funds returned by Swiss banks (Apr 1997) 41578; (Sep 1997) 41804
Death penalty commuted for Traore and former colleagues (Dec 1997) 41944

MALTA
Appointments: Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41559
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41559
Economy: Taxation (Jul 1997) 41754
Resignations: Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41559

MALVINAS *see* FALKLAND (MALVINAS) ISLANDS

MARSHALL ISLANDS
Elections: Presidential (Jan 1997) 41452
Nuclear tests compensation: (May 1997) 41646
President: Election of Imata Kabua (cousin of former President) (Jan 1997) 41452

MAURITANIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41433–4; (Feb 1997) 41482; (May 1997) 41626; (Jun 1997) 41673; (Sep 1997) 41804; (Dec 1997) 41944
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41433–4; (Feb 1997) 41482; (May 1997) 41626; (Jun 1997) 41673; (Sep 1997) 41804; (Dec 1997) 41944
Elections: Presidential (Dec 1997) 41944
Human rights: (Dec 1997) 41944
President: Taya re-elected (Dec 1997) 41944

MAURITIUS
Appointments: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41721
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41721
Dismissals: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41674
Labour Party (PTr): (Jun 1997) 41674; (Jul 1997) 41721
Mauritius Militant Movement (MMM): (Jun 1997) 41674; (Jul 1997) 41721

MERCOSUR *see* LATIN AMERICA

MEXICO
Appointments:
Anti-drugs chief (Mar 1997) 41534
Central bank governor (Dec 1997) 41953
Chiapas:
see also Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)
Massacre of unarmed Indians (Dec 1997) 41952–3
Withdrawal of government troops (Aug 1997) 41766
Congress: Opposition dominated (Sep 1997) 41809
Corruption:
Drugs cases (Feb 1997) 41489
Election promises and allegations (Jul 1997) 41728
Former special prosecutor (May 1997) 41631
Drugs:
Anti-drug agency (May 1997) 41631
Anti-laundering measures (Mar 1997) 41534–5
Arrests of Attorney General's anti-drug office staff (Sep 1997) 41809
Certification of Mexico controversy (Mar 1997) 41534
Death of Fuentes (drug baron) reported (Jul 1997) 41729
Drugs Agency chief arrested for being in pay of drug baron (Feb 1997) 41489
Murdered doctors discovered (Nov 1997) 41904
Salinas links alleged (Apr 1997) 41582
Trials of senior officials (Feb 1997) 41489
Economy:
Budget (Nov 1997) 41904; (Dec 1997) 41953
Central Bank (Jan 1997) 41441; (Dec 1997) 41953
Contingency loan (Nov 1997) 41904
Debt repayment to USA (Jan 1997) 41441
IMF (Jan 1997) 41441
National development plan (Jun 1997) 41681–2
Statistics for 1996 economic performance (Feb 1997) 41489

MEXICO (contd)
Stock markets' positive reaction to PRI election defeats (Jul 1997) 41728
Trade unions (Mar 1997) 41535; (Jun 1997) 41682; (Aug 1997) 41766
Elections:
Congressional (Jul 1997) 41728; (Aug 1997) 41766
Gubernatorial and mayoral (Jul 1997) 41728–9
Morelos (Mar 1997) 41535
Tabasco (Oct 1997) 41856
Electoral reform: (Jan 1997) 41441
Foreign relations:
Canada (Oct 1997) 41856
European Union (EU) (Mar 1997) 41535; (Dec 1997) 41953
Spain (May 1997) 41631
USA
Anti-drugs efforts (Feb 1997) 41489; (Mar 1997) 41534–5; (May 1997) 41631
Counterinsurgency operations advice for Mexican army allegations (Jan 1997) 41441
Debt repayment (Jan 1997) 41441
Execution in USA of Mexican national (Jun 1997) 41677
Visit by President Clinton (May 1997) 41630–1
Withdrawal of Clinton ambassadorial nominee (Sep 1997) 41807
Green party (Mexican Green Ecology Party (PVEM)): (Jul 1997) 41728; (Aug 1997) 41766
Guerrero:
Guerrilla activity (May 1997) 41631; (Jun 1997) 41682
Hurricane (Oct 1997) 41856
Human rights: (Mar 1997) 41535; (Oct 1997) 41856; (Nov 1997) 41904
Hurricane: (Oct 1997) 41856
Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI):
Candidates for governorships and Congress elections (Feb 1997) 41489
Defections (Feb 1997) 41489
Difficulties in opposition-dominated Congress (Sep 1997) 41809
Election defeats (Mar 1997) 41535; (Jul 1997) 41728; (Aug 1997) 41766
Leadership (Sep 1997) 41809
Links to massacre in Chiapas alleged (Dec 1997) 41952
Political reform talks (Nov 1997) 41904
Tabasco local elections (Oct 1997) 41856
Mexico City:
Mayor (Jul 1997) 41728
Zapatista rally (Sep 1997) 41809
National Action Party (PAN):
Budget debate (Dec 1997) 41953
Election results (Jul 1997) 41728; (Aug 1997) 41766
Meeting with President Clinton (May 1997) 41631
Morelos elections (Mar 1997) 41535
Political reform talks (Nov 1997) 41904
Refusal of additional election funding (Jan 1997) 41441
Tabasco elections (Oct 1997) 41856
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): (May 1997) 41630–1; (Dec 1997) 41953
Obituaries:
Castillo (Apr 1997) 41582
Union leader (Jun 1997) 41682
Party of the Democratic Centre (PCD): Launch (Feb 1997) 41489
Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD):
Castillo death (Apr 1997) 41582
Election results (Jul 1997) 41728; (Aug 1997) 41766
Meeting with President Clinton (May 1997) 41631
Morelos elections (Mar 1997) 41535
Political reform talks (Nov 1997) 41904
Refusal of additional election funding (Jan 1997) 41441
Tabasco local elections (Oct 1997) 41856
Political parties: (Jul 1997) 41728; (Aug 1997) 41766
Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR):

MEXICO (contd)
Accusations that government soldiers had impersonated guerrillas (Jan 1997) 41441
Ceasefire declaration (Jun 1997) 41682
Clashes with army in Guerrero (May 1997) 41631; (Jun 1997) 41682
President:
Electoral reform issue (Jan 1997) 41441
Meeting with, US President (May 1997) 41630–1
State of the nation address (Sep 1997) 41809
Security:
see also Drugs; Guerrero; Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR); Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)
Attack on bishop (Nov 1997) 41904
Killings (Aug 1997) 41766; (Oct 1997) 41856
Police officers arrested (Oct 1997) 41856
Tabasco: Elections (Oct 1997) 41856
Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN):
Effective control of Chiapas region (Aug 1997) 41766
Mexico City rally (Sep 1997) 41809
Peace talks question (Sep 1997) 41809; (Nov 1997) 41904
Releases from prison (Jan 1997) 41441

MIDDLE EAST
see also ISRAEL; ISRAELI-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES; LEBANON; PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS (WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP); PALESTINIAN ORGANISATIONS
Gulf War:
Gulf War syndrome controversy, UK (Feb 1997) 41515
Nerve gas exposure apology from CIA (Apr 1997) 41580
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Economic Summit: (Aug 1997) 41794; (Nov 1997) 41939
Peace process:
Arab League foreign ministers' meetings (Mar 1997) 41565–6; (Sep 1997) 41844
Bilateral negotiations
Egypt/Syria (May 1997) 41662
Israel/Egypt (May 1997) 41662
Israel/Palestinians
Agreement to reopen talks (Sep 1997) 41840; (Oct 1997) 41890
"Allon plus" proposal (Jun 1997) 41713
Attempts to revive (Apr 1997) 41614; (Jun 1997) 41713; (Aug 1997) 41794
Hebron agreement (Jan 1997) 41469–70
Military deployment issue (Nov 1997) 41940; (Dec 1997) 41981
Netanyahu/Arafat meetings (Jan 1997) 41469; (Feb 1997) 41518; (Oct 1997) 41890
Release of Palestinian prisoners (Feb 1997) 41518
Security memorandum (Dec 1997) 41981–2
Security talks (Oct 1997) 41890–1
Settlement crisis (Mar 1997) 41564–5; (May 1997) 41662; (Sep 1997) 41840; (Oct 1997) 41890
Washington talks (Nov 1997) 41939–40
Withdrawal of Palestinians (Mar 1997) 41565
Israel/Syria
Israeli Arab delegation visit to Syria (Aug 1997) 41795
Resumption called for (Jan 1997) 41470
European Union (EU) mediation (Feb 1997) 41519
Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit (Dec 1997) 41985
Russian role (Oct 1997) 41891
US role (Jan 1997) 41470; (Mar 1997) 41564–5; (May 1997) 41662; (Sep 1997) 41839–40; (Oct 1997) 41890; (Nov 1997) 41939; (Dec 1997) 41981

MOLDOVA
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Agrarian Democratic Party (PDAM): (Jan 1997) 41460; (Mar 1997) 41552; (Jun 1997) 41710
Appointments:
Military (Mar 1997) 41552
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41710; (Jul 1997) 41751
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41751
Corruption: Privatisation (Jun 1997) 41710
Defence:
Amendment of defence law (Oct 1997) 41879
Armed forces, Appointments (Mar 1997) 41552
Dnestr:
Confidence-building measures (Oct 1997) 41879
Economic and social co-operation agreement signed (Nov 1997) 41930
Government structure approved (Feb 1997) 41509
Inauguration of president (Jan 1997) 41460
Normalisation memorandum
Talks (Jan 1997) 41460
Agreement on (Apr 1997) 41611
Signed (May 1997) 41660
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) role (May 1997) 41660; (Dec 1997) 41978
Withdrawal of Russian troops (Apr 1997) 41611
Economy:
Budget (Mar 1997) 41552; (Dec 1997) 41978
IMF loan postponed (Nov 1997) 41930
Privatisation (Jun 1997) 41710
World Bank loan (Sep 1997) 41832; (Nov 1997) 41930
Electoral law: (Nov 1997) 41930
Foreign relations:
Iran (Nov 1997) 41939
Poland (Dec 1997) 41978
Russia, Dnestr (Apr 1997) 41611; (May 1997) 41660
USA (Nov 1997) 41939
Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova:
Alliance formed to follow centrist platform (Sep 1997) 41832
Inauguration (Feb 1997) 41509
Parliamentul:
Prime Ministerial elections (Jan 1997) 41460
Speaker elected (Mar 1997) 41552
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41710; (Sep 1997) 41832
President: Inauguration (Jan 1997) 41460
Prime Minister: Appointment of Prime Minister designate (Jan 1997) 41460

MONACO, Anniversary celebrations of Royal Grimaldi: (Jan 1997) 41469

MONGOLIA
Appointments: Presidential advisers (Jun 1997) 41690
Democratic Union (DU): (Apr 1997) 41591; (May 1997) 41638
Economy:
Abolition of tariffs and trade taxes (Apr 1997) 41590–1
Budget (Nov 1997) 41920
Increased aid pledge (Oct 1997) 41864
Privatisation (Sep 1997) 41817
Reform programme (May 1997) 41638
Elections: Presidential (Mar 1997) 41548; (May 1997) 41638
Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP): (Feb 1997) 41502; (May 1997) 41638; (Jun 1997) 41690
Mongolian United Conservative Party: (May 1997) 41638
President:
Ochirbat defeated by Bagabandi (May 1997) 41638
Inauguration of Bagabandi (Jun 1997) 41690

MONTSERRAT
Aid promises:
CARICOM (Aug 1997) 41769
Cuba (Aug 1997) 41769
UK (Jun 1997) 41682; (Sep 1997) 41812–13
Chief Minister: Replacement of Osborne by Brandt (Aug 1997) 41769
Criticism of UK response to volcano crisis: (Aug 1997) 41768–9

MONTSERRAT (contd)
Foreign trade: European Union (EU) (Jan 1997) 41469
UK initiative to counter money laundering: (Jan 1997) 41443
Volcanic eruptions: (Jun 1997) 41682; (Aug 1997) 41768–9; (Sep 1997) 41813

MOROCCO
Appointments: Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41796
Cabinet: (Aug 1997) 41796–7
Constitutional Union (UC): (Nov 1997) 41935; (Dec 1997) 41983
Economy: Budget (May 1997) 41664
Elections:
Legislative
Tentative dates (Aug 1997) 41797
Results (Nov 1997) 41935–6
Local (Jun 1997) 41713
Upper house (Chamber of Councillors) (Dec 1997) 41983
Foreign relations:
Chad (May 1997) 41664
Zaïre (Feb 1997) 41477
Istiqlal: (Nov 1997) 41935; (Dec 1997) 41983
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41713; (Nov 1997) 41935–6; (Dec 1997) 41983
Progress and Socialism Party (PSP): (Jun 1997) 41713
Security: Student unrest (Feb 1997) 41521
Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP): (Nov 1997) 41935; (Dec 1997) 41983
Trials: Students sentenced (Feb 1997) 41521
Western Sahara: *see* WESTERN SAHARA

MOZAMBIQUE, Dismissals: Attorney General (Dec 1997) 41950

MYANMAR *see* BURMA

N

NAFTA *see* NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA)

NAMIBIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41947
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41947
Economy: Budget (Mar 1997) 41529
Environment: Ivory trade (Jun 1997) 41717
Obituary of Garoeb: (Sep 1997) 41805–6
President: Re-elected as SWAPO party president (May 1997) 41628
South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO): Congress (May 1997) 41628

NATO *see* NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO)

NAURU
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41502
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41502
Elections: (Feb 1997) 41502
President: Kiodimar elected (Feb 1997) 41502

NEPAL
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41449; (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jun 1997) 41692; (Sep 1997) 41820; (Oct 1997) 41864; (Dec 1997) 41964
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41449; (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jun 1997) 41692; (Sep 1997) 41820; (Oct 1997) 41864; (Dec 1997) 41964
Economy: World Bank loans (Dec 1997) 41964
Elections:
By-elections (Jan 1997) 41449
Local (May 1997) 41646; (Jun 1997) 41692
Foreign relations: India, Water treaty ratified (Jun 1997) 41692
Nepal Congress Party (NCP): (Jan 1997) 41449; (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jun 1997) 41692; (Sep 1997) 41820; (Oct 1997) 41864; (Dec 1997) 41964
Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP): (Jan 1997) 41449; (Mar 1997) 41544; (Sep 1997) 41820; (Oct 1997) 41864; (Dec 1997) 41964

NEPAL (contd)
Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party (NWPP): (Jan 1997) 41449
Political parties: (Jan 1997) 41449; (Apr 1997) 41544
Prime Minister:
Chand
Appointment (Apr 1997) 41544
Resignation (Oct 1997) 41864
Deuba
Coalition difficulties (Jan 1997) 41449
Resignation (Mar 1997) 41544
Thapa (Oct 1997) 41864
Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP): (Jan 1997) 41449; (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jun 1997) 41692; (Sep 1997) 41820; (Oct 1997) 41864; (Dec 1997) 41964
Refugees from Bhutan: (Apr 1997) 41588
Resignations:
Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41864
Prime Minister (Mar 1997) 41544; (Oct 1997) 41864
Security:
Demonstrations by Bhutanese refugees (Apr 1997) 41588
Election violence (Jun 1997) 41692
United Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN): (Jan 1997) 41449; (Mar 1997) 41544; (May 1997) 41646; (Jun 1997) 41692; (Sep 1997) 41820; (Oct 1997) 41864; (Dec 1997) 41964

NETHERLANDS
Drugs: (Mar 1997) 41534
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41558
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Surinam (Mar 1997) 41534
Foreign trade: Russia (Nov 1997) 41921
Netherlands Antilles: *see* NETHERLANDS ANTILLES
Sex industry: (Jul 1997) 41754

NETHERLANDS ANTILLES, Foreign trade: European Union (EU) (Jan 1997) 41469

NEW CALEDONIA, Kanak people: (May 1997) 41645–6

NEW ZEALAND
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41967
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41967
Economy:
Budget (Jun 1997) 41687
Pre-budget statement (Mar 1997) 41548
Education: (Jun 1997) 41687
Foreign relations:
Fiji (Sep 1997) 41825
Japan (Apr 1997) 41591
Western Samoa (May 1997) 41645
Health care: (Jun 1997) 41687
National Party: Leadership (Nov 1997) 41919–20; (Dec 1997) 41967
Niue: *see* NIUE
Obituary of Maori politician: (Jul 1997) 41741
Parliament: Assault allegations against Deputy Prime Minister Peters (Mar 1997) 41548; (Jun 1997) 41687
Prime Minister:
Resignation of Bolger (Nov 1997) 41919–20
Shipley sworn in (Dec 1997) 41967
Resignations: Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41919–20
Security:
Gun laws inquiry (Feb 1997) 41502
Mass killing in Raurimu (Feb 1997) 41502

NICARAGUA
see also CENTRAL AMERICA
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41442; (May 1997) 41631; (Jun 1997) 41683; (Oct 1997) 41856
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41442; (May 1997) 41631
Economy: Properties law (Sep 1997) 41810; (Dec 1997) 41953
Foreign relations:
Honduras (Jun 1997) 41683

NICARAGUA (contd)
Taiwan (Jul 1997) 41738; (Sep 1997) 41814
Liberal Alliance (AL):
Inauguration of new government (Jan 1997) 41442
Withdrawal of PLN (May 1997) 41631
Managua Declaration on regional political union: (Sep 1997) 41813
Nationalist Liberal Party (PLN): Withdrawal from Liberal Alliance (AL) (May 1997) 41631
President: Inauguration of Alemán (Jan 1997) 41442
Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN):
Boycott of new National Assembly (Jan 1997) 41442
Ortega
Defence of "armed struggle" (Oct 1997) 41856
Dialogue with government (Jan 1997) 41442
Properties law (Sep 1997) 41810
Referendum call on future of government (Jul 1997) 41729
Security:
Andres Castro United Front (FUAC) disarmament agreement (Nov 1997) 41907; (Dec 1997) 41953
Disarming of former contras (Jul 1997) 41729
Student demonstrations and violence (Jul 1997) 41729
Supreme Court: Laws passed by outgoing National Assembly declared null and void (Jan 1997) 41442

NIGER
Appointments:
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41673; (Dec 1997) 41945
Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41899
Armed forces:
Integration of former rebels (Sep 1997) 41804
Mutiny in Agadez garrison (Jun 1997) 41673
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41673; (Dec 1997) 41945
Corruption: Saibou (opposition leader) facing embezzlement charges (Dec 1997) 41945
Foreign relations: Libya (May 1997) 41664
Front for the Restoration and Defence of Democracy: (Dec 1997) 41945
President: Dissolution of government (Apr 1997) 41579; (Nov 1997) 41899
Prime Minister:
Cisse and his government dismissed (Nov 1997) 41899
Denunciation of protests (Jan 1997) 41433
Mayaki appointed (Nov 1997) 41899
Saharan Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARS): (Sep 1997) 41804; (Dec 1997) 41945
Security:
Anti-government demonstrations (Jan 1997) 41433
Arrest of opposition leaders (Jan 1997) 41433
Ban on demonstrations (Jul 1997) 41725
Demonstrations and violence (Jul 1997) 41725
Mutiny in Agadez garrison (Jun 1997) 41673
Tuaregs:
Agadez mutiny (Jun 1997) 41673
Ceasefire signed between Tuareg and Toubou communities and the government (Dec 1997) 41945
Peace agreement difficulties (Sep 1997) 41804
Union of Armed Resistance Forces (UFRA) (Sep 1997) 41804; (Dec 1997) 41945

NIGERIA
Abacha:
Commitment on return to democracy (Nov 1997) 41899
Demonstrations to support his leadership (Nov 1997) 41899
Dissolution of Cabinet (Nov 1997) 41899
Illness report (Oct 1997) 41849
Possible candidacy in future elections (Feb 1997) 41481; (Nov 1997) 41899
Re-elected ECOWAS chairman (Aug 1997) 41763
Visit to Ghana (Jan 1997) 41435
Appointments: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41946
Cabinet (Federal Executive Council): (Nov 1997) 41899; (Dec 1997) 41946

NIGERIA (contd)
Commonwealth:
Commonwealth ministerial action group (CMAG) (Feb 1997) 41481; (Jul 1997) 41724
Continued suspension (Oct 1997) 41849
Sanctions (Oct 1997) 41892
Defence:
Armed forces
see also AFRICA, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
Sierra Leone peacekeeping forces (Jun 1997) 41672; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41849–50
Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN): (Dec 1997) 41946
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summits: (Aug 1997) 41763; (Dec 1997) 41950
Economy:
Budget (Jan 1997) 41434
Natural gas project in doubt (Jun 1997) 41672
Oil shortages (Apr 1997) 41577
Shell oil well closures (Apr 1997) 41577
Elections:
Local
Delays (Feb 1997) 41481
Massive turnout (Mar 1997) 41528
State assembly (Dec 1997) 41946
Timetable (Jul 1997) 41723–4
Foreign relations:
Canada (Mar 1997) 41528
Ghana (Jan 1997) 41435
Libya (May 1997) 41664
Sierra Leone (May 1997) 41625; (Jun 1997) 41672; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41849–50
UK, Flights banned (May 1997) 41625
USA (Oct 1997) 41849
Human rights:
see also Soyinka
Abacha's possible amnesty offer (Nov 1997) 41899
Abiola's continued detention (Nov 1997) 41899
Canada's suspension of diplomatic relations (Mar 1997) 41528
CMAG call for further information (Feb 1997) 41481
Deaths
Journalist following release from police custody (Oct 1997) 41849
Yar'Adua in police custody (Dec 1997) 41945–6
Objectors to oil and gas exploitation (Jun 1997) 41672
Media: Harassment of journalists (Oct 1997) 41849
National Democratic Coalition (Nadeco):
Blamed for bomb attacks (May 1997) 41625; (Oct 1997) 41849
Coup plot allegations seen as a ploy to arrest opposition leaders (Dec 1997) 41945–6
Death of Ajasin (Nadeco chair) (Oct 1997) 41849
Obituary of Ajasin (chairman of Nadeco): (Oct 1997) 41849
Security:
Arrests in wake of alleged coup plot (Dec 1997) 49145–6
Bomb explosions
Ibadan (May 1997) 41625
Lagos (Jan 1997) 41434; (May 1997) 41625
Onitsha (May 1997) 41625
Communal clashes in Delta and Plateau states (Apr 1997) 41577
Election violence (Mar 1997) 41528
Shell employees taken hostage (Apr 1997) 41577
Treason charges against dissidents (Mar 1997) 41528
Soyinka: Treason charge (Mar 1997) 41528
UN: Sanctions (Jul 1997) 41724
United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP): (Dec 1997) 41946
Yoruba: Arrests of leaders (Dec 1997) 49145–6

NIUE
Appointments: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41872

NIUE (contd)
Dismissals: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41872
Foreign relations: USA (May 1997) 41646

NOBEL PRIZES, 1997 awards: (Oct 1997) 41893

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA)
Banana exports to European Union (EU) question: (May 1997) 41635
Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA) discussions: (May 1997) 41634
Mexico: (Dec 1997) 41953
Mexico/USA summit: (May 1997) 41630–1

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO)
Albania crisis: (Mar 1997) 41557–8
Appointments: Supreme Allied Commander Europe (Mar 1997) 41569
Bosnia-Herzegovina:
Stabilisation force (S-For)
Action against war criminals (Jul 1997) 41749; (Aug 1997) 41790
Brcko (Feb 1997) 41504; (May 1997) 41655
Extension of mandate called for (Nov 1997) 41933
Killing of Drljaca (war criminal) (Jul 1997) 41749
Macedonia desire for NATO troops to stay (Jun 1997) 41704
Municipal elections (Sep 1997) 41833
Plavsic distress call from Banja Luka (Jul 1997) 41748–9
Republika Srpska elections (Oct 1997) 41874
Seizure of television transmitters (Oct 1997) 41874
US promise to remain after ending of mandate (Dec 1997) 41978
Denmark: (Jul 1997) 41757
Enlargement questions:
Baltic states (Apr 1997) 41608; (Jul 1997) 41756; (Sep 1997) 41839
Bulgaria (Jan 1997) 41453; (Feb 1997) 41506; (Apr 1997) 41604; (May 1997) 41652–3; (Oct 1997) 41876
Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Czech Republic (Jul 1997) 41750
Hungary (Feb 1997) 41511; (May 1997) 41655; (Oct 1997) 41873; (Nov 1997) 41932
Lithuania (Oct 1997) 41881
Madrid summit discussions (Jul 1997) 41756–7
NATO foreign ministers' discussions (May 1997) 41665–6
Papal opinion (Jun 1997) 41707
Poland (Nov 1997) 41931
Romania (Feb 1997) 41511; (Apr 1997) 41607; (Jul 1997) 41756–7; (Oct 1997) 41874; 41876
Russian fears (Feb 1997) 41521; (Mar 1997) 41549; 41569; (Apr 1997) 41617; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Sep 1997) 41839
Slovakia (Feb 1997) 41504; (Apr 1997) 41607; (May 1997) 41656; (Jul 1997) 41750
Slovenia (May 1997) 41655; (Jul 1997) 41756
Foreign relations:
Argentina (Aug 1997) 41768; (Oct 1997) 41858
Turkey, Reaction to Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652
France: Reintegration question (Feb 1997) 41521; (Jul 1997) 41742; 41757
Helsinki summit: (Mar 1997) 41569
Kazakhstan peacekeeping exercises: (Sep 1997) 41818
Kohl-Yeltsin meeting: (Apr 1997) 41617
Madrid summit: (Jul 1997) 41756–7
Map: (May 1997) 41665
Partnerships for peace programme:
Azerbaijan (Sep 1997) 41836
Switzerland (Apr 1997) 41617
Russia-NATO Founding Act on Mutual Relations: (May 1997) 41657; 41665; (Dec 1997) 41974
Spain: UK-Spain dispute over Gibraltar (Jul 1997) 41742
Ukraine-NATO security pact: (May 1997) 41665–6; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Aug 1997) 41787

NORWAY
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41515; (Oct 1997) 41881
Cabinet: (Oct 1997) 41881
Christian People's Party (KrF): (Oct 1997) 41881
Economy:
Budget (Oct 1997) 41881
EU liquor monopoly ruling (Mar 1997) 41563
Elections: Legislative (Sep 1997) 41829–30
Environment: Whaling (Oct 1997) 41892
Eugenics (forced sterilisations) programme admitted: (Aug 1997) 41784
Foreign relations:
Greenland (Nov 1997) 41924
Iceland (Nov 1997) 41924
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Foreign trade: Czech Republic (Mar 1997) 41553
Labour Party (DNA): (Aug 1997) 41784; (Sep 1997) 41830; (Oct 1997) 41881
Obituary of Syse: (Sep 1997) 41830
Political parties: (Sep 1997) 41829–30; (Oct 1997) 41881
Prime Minister: Jagland's admission on KGB contacts (Aug 1997) 41784
Resignations: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41515

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT *see* DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

NUCLEAR ENERGY
Australia: (Sep 1997) 41825
China:
Co-operation with USA (Oct 1997) 41860
Regulations on export of nuclear materials tightened (Sep 1997) 41914
France: Closure of Super-Phénix reactor promised (Jun 1997) 41695
Indonesia: (Feb 1997) 41501; (Aug 1997) 41778
Iran: (Sep 1997) 41842
Israel: (Oct 1997) 41889–90
Japan:
Allegations of mismanagement (Apr 1997) 41592
Closure of Fugen reactor (Apr 1997) 41592
Explosion at nuclear fuel reprocessing plant (Mar 1997) 41539; (Apr 1997) 41592
Plans for new power station scrapped (Mar 1997) 41539
Radioactive leak reported at Tokalmura plant (Aug 1997) 41772
Korea, North: KEDO consortium (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Aug 1997) 41772
Sweden: Closure of two reactors (Feb 1997) 41515
Ukraine:
Chernobyl power station
Aid for (Sep 1997) 41838; (Nov 1997) 41923
Closure delayed (Feb 1997) 41509; (Sep 1997) 41838
Programme for closure (Apr 1997) 41611
Takeover plan by national energy company (Sep 1997) 41838

NUCLEAR TESTS, Marshall Islands: Compensation payments (May 1997) 41646

NUCLEAR WASTE
Australia: (Sep 1997) 41825
Germany: (Mar 1997) 41560
Taiwan deal with North Korea: (Mar 1997) 41541

NUCLEAR WEAPONS
see also DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL
Iran: USA-Israel fears concerning (Sep 1997) 41842
Israel (Oct 1997) 41890
Korea, North: (May 1997) 41642
Russia: (Feb 1997) 41507; (May 1997) 41665; (Jun 1997) 41708; (Oct 1997) 41855
USA: Nuclear strategy report (Dec 1997) 41951

O

OAS *see* ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)

OAU *see* ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)

OECD *see* ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

OIC *see* ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)

OMAN
Appointments:
Council of State (Dec 1997) 41981
Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41981
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41981
Consultative Council: (Oct 1997) 41889
Council of State: (Dec 1997) 41981

OPEC *see* ORGANISATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC)

ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)
Comoros:
Anjouan secession referendum (Oct 1997) 41852
Mediation in separatists' demand for return to French rule (Aug 1997) 41762–3; (Sep 1997) 41805
Military observers despatched to Anjouan (Nov 1997) 41901
Congo: Mediation mission (Aug 1997) 41759
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaire): (Aug 1997) 41759
Liberia: (Feb 1997) 41481–2
Rwanda: International investigation of 1994 genocide proposed (Nov 1997) 41897; (Dec 1997) 41950
Sudan civil war: (Jan 1997) 41433
Summit: (Jun 1997) 41674

ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)
Colombia elections: (Oct 1997) 41856; (Nov 1997) 41905
General Assembly: (Jun 1997) 41682–3
Guyana elections: (Dec 1997) 41954
Haiti: (May 1997) 41633; (Jun 1997) 41683
Peru: (Jun 1997) 41681

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD), Korea, South: (Jan 1997) 41444; (Nov 1997) 41909

ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)
Côte d'Ivoire observer status: (Dec 1997) 41985
Foreign ministers' annual meeting: (Oct 1997) 41893
Invitation to Iraq: (Jun 1997) 41715
Summits: (Mar 1997) 41570; (Dec 1997) 41984–5
Togo membership: (Oct 1997) 41893

ORGANISATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC)
Death of Tariki (Saudi Arabia's first Oil Minister): (Sep 1997) 41842
Iran-Saudi Arabia relations: (Jul 1997) 41756
Oil ministers' meeting: (Nov 1997) 41941
Production quotas agreed: (Nov 1997) 41941

ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)
Albania: (Mar 1997) 41557; (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (May 1997) 41653; (Jun 1997) 41703–4; (Jul 1997) 41747; (Aug 1997) 41789
Azerbaijan/Armenia/Nagorno Karabakh dispute: (Apr 1997) 41612; (Jun 1997) 41710; (Sep 1997) 41835–6; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Belarus: (Jan 1997) 41459; (Nov 1997) 41923
Belarus-Russia Union Treaty: (Jun 1997) 41709
Bosnia-Herzegovina:
Arms control agreement (Nov 1997) 41933
Bomb attacks on OSCE offices (Jul 1997) 41749
Brcko (May 1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41704
Municipal elections (Mar 1997) 41555; (May

ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE) (contd)
1997) 41655; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874
Republika Srpska elections (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41874; (Nov 1997) 41933
Croatian elections: (Apr 1997) 41606; (Jun 1997) 41705
Moldova: Dnestr (May 1997) 41660; (Dec 1997) 41978
Russia: Chechnya presidential elections (Jan 1997) 41458
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY): Serbian elections (Jan 1997) 41455; (Feb 1997) 41503; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41875; (Dec 1997) 41978

OSCE *see* ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

P

PACIFIC REGIONS
see also ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES; ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH-EAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)
Foreign trade: European Union (EU) (May 1997) 41651
South Pacific Commission:
Canberra conference (Oct 1997) 41871
Renaming (May 1997) 41646; (Oct 1997) 41871
UK membership question (Oct 1997) 41871
South Pacific Forum (SPF): Annual summit (Sep 1997) 41825
Spearhead Group: (May 1997) 41645–6

PAKISTAN
50th anniversary of independence: (Mar 1997) 41570; (Aug 1997) 41775
Appointments:
Military (Apr 1997) 41587–8; (May 1997) 41636
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41498–9; (Jul 1997) 41740
Arms trade with: Afghanistan (Dec 1997) 41966
Bhutto, Benazir:
Arrest for corruption called for (Oct 1997) 41865
Condemnation of creation of national security council (Jan 1997) 41447–8
Drug trafficking allegations (Sep 1997) 41819
Election defeat for PPP (Feb 1997) 41498
Freezing of Bhutto assets in Switzerland (Sep 1997) 41819
Supreme Court ruling on her dismissal as Prime Minister (Jan 1997) 41448
Bhutto, Murtaza:
Investigations into his killing (Jan 1997) 41448; (Jun 1997) 41691–2
Zardari indicted (Jul 1997) 41740
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41498–9; (Jul 1997) 41740
Constitution: (Mar 1997) 41543; (Apr 1997) 41587; (Jul 1997) 41740; (Nov 1997) 41913–14
Corruption:
Bhutto and family (Jan 1997) 41448; (Sep 1997) 41819; (Oct 1997) 41865
Military purchasing contracts (Apr 1997) 41587
Defence:
Armed forces, Council for Defence and National Security (CDNS) formed (Jan 1997) 41447–8
Landmines (Sep 1997) 41845
Disasters:
Earthquake (Mar 1997) 41543
Fatal gas leak in Lahore (Jan 1997) 41448
Train crash (Mar 1997) 41543
Dismissals:
Military (Apr 1997) 41587
Supreme Court chief justice (Dec 1997) 41965
Drugs:
Air force officer (Apr 1997) 41587
Bhutto family allegations (Sep 1997) 41819
Economy:
Austerity measures (Feb 1997) 41499
Budget (Jan 1997) 41448; (Jun 1997) 41692
Currency devaluation (Oct 1997) 41865–6
Economic revival programme (Mar 1997) 41543
Energy (May 1997) 41666
Food shortages (Apr 1997) 41588

PAKISTAN (contd)
IMF (Mar 1997) 41543; (Oct 1997) 41865–6; (Dec 1997) 41966
Investment incentives (Dec 1997) 41965
Taxation (Mar 1997) 41543
World Bank loan (Dec 1997) 41965–6
Elections:
Legislative
Preparations for (Jan 1997) 41448
Results (Feb 1997) 41498
Presidential (Dec 1997) 41965
Provincial (Feb 1997) 41498
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41693; (Dec 1997) 41966
India
Demonstrations by Pakistanis (Oct 1997) 41865
Eighth round of talks (Mar 1997) 41543
Exchanges of fire on line of control (Aug 1997) 41775; (Sep 1997) 41819; (Oct 1997) 41865
Expulsion of diplomats (Sep 1997) 41819; (Oct 1997) 41865
Kashmir talks (Jun 1997) 41691; (Sep 1997) 41819; (Dec 1997) 41965
Kashmir and visit of Queen Elizabeth II (Oct 1997) 41865
Ministerial meetings (Apr 1997) 41588
Prime Ministers' meetings (May 1997) 41636; (Sep 1997) 41819
Iran (Sep 1997) 41819
Switzerland (Sep 1997) 41819
UK (Oct 1997) 41865
USA (Nov 1997) 41914
Foreign trade:
India (May 1997) 41636
Turkmenistan (May 1997) 41666; (Oct 1997) 41866
USA (Apr 1997) 41588
Map: (Feb 1997) 41499
Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N):
Constitutional changes (Mar 1997) 41543
Election success (Feb 1997) 41498
Pakistan People's Party (PPP):
Election defeat (Feb 1997) 41498
Election preparations (Jan 1997) 41448
Political parties: (Feb 1997) 41498
President:
Constitutional crisis (Nov 1997) 41913–14
Reduction in presidential powers (Apr 1997) 41587
Resignation of Leghari (Dec 1997) 41965
Tarar's election (Dec 1997) 41965
Prime Minister:
Address to UN General Assembly (Sep 1997) 41819
Appeal to the nation on financial crisis (Feb 1997) 41499
Constitutional crisis (Nov 1997) 41913–14
Meetings with Indian Prime Minister (May 1997) 41636; (Sep 1997) 41819
Sharif's formal election (Feb 1997) 41498–9
Punjab: Attacks on Christians (Feb 1997) 41499
Religious affairs:
Christians attacked in Punjab (Feb 1997) 41499
Sunni-Shia violence (Aug 1997) 41775; (Sep 1997) 41819
Resignations:
Baluchistan governor (Apr 1997) 41588
President Leghari (Dec 1997) 41965
Security:
Anti-terrorism legislation (Aug 1997) 41775
Council for Defence and National Security (CDNS) (Apr 1997) 41587
Killings
Iranian airforce technicians (Sep 1997) 41819
Sunni Muslim activist (Jul 1997) 41740
US citizens (Nov 1997) 41914
Sunni-Shia violence (Aug 1997) 41775; (Sep 1997) 41819
Supreme Court:
Prime Minister charged with contempt for judiciary (Nov 1997) 41913–14
Ruling on dismissal of Bhutto (Jan 1997) 41448
Tehreek-e-Insaaf (Movement for Justice) (Imran Khan's party): (Feb 1997) 41498

PAKISTAN (contd)
Trials:
Arrest of Zardari (Bhutto's father-in-law) (Jan 1997) 41448
Zardari (Bhutto's husband) for murder of Murtaza Bhutto (Jan 1997) 41448; (Jun 1997) 41691–2; (Jul 1997) 41740

PALAU, IMF membership: (Dec 1997) 41968

PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANISATION (PLO)
see PALESTINIAN ORGANISATIONS

PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS (WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP)
see also MIDDLE EAST, Peace process
Aid: International donors' meeting (Dec 1997) 41982
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41470
Arafat:
Condemnation of Jerusalem suicide bombing (Aug 1997) 41794
Condolences to Israel for helicopter crash deaths (Feb 1997) 41517
Har Homa settlement warning (Feb 1997) 41518
Health problems (Nov 1997) 41940
Meetings with
Egyptian President (Feb 1997) 41518
Israeli Foreign Minister (Apr 1997) 41614; (Aug 1997) 41794
Israeli President (May 1997) 41662
Israeli Prime Minister (Jan 1997) 41469; (Feb 1997) 41518; (Oct 1997) 41890–1
US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41840
Visits to
Egypt (Jan 1997) 41470
Hebron (Jan 1997) 41470
Russia (Feb 1997) 41518
UK (Aug 1997) 41795
USA (Mar 1997) 41564–5
Corruption: Investigation into allegations against PNA (Jun 1997) 41714; (Aug 1997) 41795
Death penalty for sale of land to Jews: (May 1997) 41662; (Jun 1997) 41714
Economy:
Budget (Jun 1997) 41714
IMF report (Mar 1997) 41566
Securities Exchange (PSE) opened in Nablus (Feb 1997) 41519
Foreign relations:
see also MIDDLE EAST, Peace process
Czech Republic (Sep 1997) 41831
Egypt (Jan 1997) 41470; (Feb 1997) 41518
Iran (Jan 1997) 41470
Russia (Feb 1997) 41518
UK (Aug 1997) 41795
USA
Congressional vote on Jerusalem (Jun 1997) 41714
Visit of US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Hebron:
Agreement on withdrawal of Israeli troops (Jan 1997) 41469–70
Arafat visit (Jan 1997) 41470
Attack on civilians by Israeli soldier (Jan 1997) 41470
Netanyahu threat to crack down on Palestinian protestors (Aug 1997) 41793
Unrest (Jun 1997) 41713–14; (Aug 1997) 41793–4
Human rights: (Feb 1997) 41519; (Dec 1997) 41982
Map: (Mar 1997) 41565
Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC):
Resignation of Abdel-Shafi rejected (Oct 1997) 41891
Palestinian National Authority (PNA):
Boycott of MENA economic conference (Nov 1997) 41939
Commonwealth membership application (Oct 1997) 41892
Corruption allegations (Aug 1997) 41795
Jerusalem census blocked by Knesset (Dec 1997) 41981

PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS (WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP) (contd)
Palestinian Popular Forces Party: (Nov 1997) 41940
President of Palestinian Council's executive authority: *see* Arafat
Release of Palestinian prisoners by Israel: (Feb 1997) 41518
Resignations:
Attorney General (Jun 1997) 41714
Ministerial (May 1997) 41662; (Aug 1997) 41795
Security:
see also Hebron
Arrests
Hamas members responsible for Tel Aviv bombing (Apr 1997) 41614
Palestinian police officers by Israelis (Aug 1997) 41794
Bethlehem unrest (Nov 1997) 41940
Clash with Israeli undercover soldiers (Feb 1997) 41519
Closure of West Bank and Gaza Strip in response to Jerusalem suicide bombings (Sep 1997) 41839
Detention of Palestinians (Sep 1997) 41839
Ending of Palestinian-Israeli co-operation in Gaza Strip (Mar 1997) 41565
Jerusalem suicide bombings reactions (Aug 1997) 41794; (Sep 1997) 41839
Killings
Palestinian child in Bethlehem (Nov 1997) 41940
Palestinian land dealers (Jun 1997) 41714
Police in Nablus (Aug 1997) 41794; (Nov 1997) 41940
Resumption of Palestinian/Israeli co-operation (Apr 1997) 41614
Sacrilegious leaflets (Jun 1997) 41713–14; (Aug 1997) 41793–4
Strike by Palestinian teachers (Apr 1997) 41615
Violence over settlements issue (Mar 1997) 41564–5; 41566
Statehood question: (Jan 1997) 41470
Withdrawal of Israeli troops: (Jan 1997) 41469–70; (Mar 1997) 41565

PALESTINIAN ORGANISATIONS
Hamas:
Arrest of Hamas official in Jordan (Sep 1997) 41841
Assassination attempt against Hamas official in Jordan (Sep 1997) 41841
Suicide bombings
Jerusalem (Aug 1997) 41794; (Sep 1997) 41839
Tel Aviv (Mar 1997) 41566; (Apr 1997) 41614
Visit of Abu Marzuk to Jordan following deportation from USA (May 1997) 41663
Hezbollah: *see* LEBANON
Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO):
Arafat *see* PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS (WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP)
Charter amendment (Jan 1997) 41470
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC):
Lebanese targets attacked by Israel (Oct 1997) 41889

PANAMA
Economy: IMF credit (Dec 1997) 41953
Foreign relations:
China (Sep 1997) 41810
Colombia (Apr 1997) 41583; (Jul 1997) 41732; (Nov 1997) 41904–5
Ecuador (Apr 1997) 41583
Taiwan (Sep 1997) 41810; 41814
USA (Dec 1997) 41953
Managua Declaration on regional political union: Observer status (Sep 1997) 41813
Panama Canal:
Congress (Sep 1997) 41810
Tentative agreement with USA (Dec 1997) 41953
Refugees from Colombia: (Jul 1997) 41732
Resignations: Panama Canal Commission (PCC) chairman (Sep 1997) 41810

PANAMA (contd)
Security: Armed clashes with Colombian refugees (Jul 1997) 41732

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
see also PACIFIC REGIONS
Appointments:
Governor-General (Nov 1997) 41920
Military (Jul 1997) 41741
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41548; (Aug 1997) 41778–9; (Nov 1997) 41920; (Dec 1997) 41968
Armed forces: (Feb 1997) 41502; (Jul 1997) 41741
Bougainville:
Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) (Feb 1997) 41502; (May 1997) 41644; (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41741; (Aug 1997) 41779; (Oct 1997) 41871
Hostages released (Jul 1997) 41741
Killings (May 1997) 41644
Mercenaries brought in against secessionists (Feb 1997) 41502; (Mar 1997) 41547; (Apr 1997) 41496; (May 1997) 41644; (Jun 1997) 41686; (Aug 1997) 41779
Peace talks (Jul 1997) 41741; (Aug 1997) 41779; (Oct 1997) 41871; (Nov 1997) 41920
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41548; (Aug 1997) 41778–9; (Nov 1997) 41920; (Dec 1997) 41967–8
Constitutional crisis: (Mar 1997) 41547
Corruption:
Bribery allegations against Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41920; (Dec 1997) 41967–8
Inquiry into foreign mercenaries (Mar 1997) 41547–8; (Apr 1997) 41596; (May 1997) 41644; (Aug 1997) 41779
Misconduct charges against minister (Oct 1997) 41871
Dismissals: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41825; (Dec 1997) 41968
Drought: (Sep 1997) 41825
Economy: IMF (Sep 1997) 41825
Elections: General (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41741
Foreign relations:
Australia (Feb 1997) 41502
China (Sep 1997) 41825
Solomon Islands (Jul 1997) 41741
South Africa (Feb 1997) 41502
Taiwan (Sep 1997) 41825
Human rights: (May 1997) 41644
Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum (ICRAF): (May 1997) 41644
Map: (Mar 1997) 41547
National Alliance party: (Jun 1997) 41686
Pangu Pati party: (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41741; (Dec 1997) 41967
People's Democratic Movement (PDM): (Sep 1997) 41825
People's Progress Party (PPP): (Jul 1997) 41741; (Aug 1997) 41779; (Dec 1997) 41967–8
Political parties: (Jul 1997) 41741
Prime Minister:
Chan
Resignation (Mar 1997) 41547–8
Return (Jun 1997) 41686
Skate
Elected (Jul 1997) 41741
Bribery allegations (Nov 1997) 41920
Resignations:
Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41967
Prime Minister (Mar 1997) 41547–8
Security:
see also Bougainville
Arrests following March demonstrations (May 1997) 41644
Demonstrations (Mar 1997) 41547–8
UK mercenaries issue (Feb 1997) 41502; (Mar 1997) 41547; (Apr 1997) 41596; (May 1997) 41644; (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41741
Trials: Singherok over use of foreign mercenaries (Jul 1997) 41741

PARAGUAY
Appointments:
Military (Nov 1997) 41906

PARAGUAY (contd)
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41488; (Jul 1997) 41732; (Sep 1997) 41811
Armed forces:
Appointment of Commander (Nov 1997) 41906
Disciplinary action against Oviedo (Oct 1997) 41857
Retirement of officers loyal to Oviedo (Jan 1997) 41443
Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA):
Electoral pact with National Encounter (EN) party (Aug 1997) 41767
Presidential candidate (Sep 1997) 41811
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41488; (Jul 1997) 41732
Colorado Party (ANR-PC):
Impeachment of president recommended (Aug 1997) 41767
Internal rift (Feb 1997) 41488
Presidential candidate (Sep 1997) 41811; (Oct 1997) 41857; (Nov 1997) 41906; (Dec 1997) 41955
Corruption: Banking scandal (Jul 1997) 41732
Elections: Presidential, Primaries (Sep 1997) 41811; (Oct 1997) 41857
Foreign relations: Taiwan (Sep 1997) 41814
National Encounter (EN): (Sep 1997) 41811
Obituary of Perez: (Apr 1997) 41586
Oviedo:
Displinary action controversy (Oct 1997) 41857; (Nov 1997) 41906
Presidential candidate (Sep 1997) 41811; (Oct 1997) 41857; (Nov 1997) 41906
Retirement of officers loyal to Oviedo (Jan 1997) 41443
Surrender (Dec 1997) 41955
President:
Disciplinary action against Oviedo (Oct 1997) 41857; (Nov 1997) 41906; (Dec 1997) 41955
Impeachment of Wasmosy recommended by Colorado Party executive (Aug 1997) 41767
Resignations: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41488; (Sep 1997) 41811; (Nov 1997) 41906
Security: Oviedo crisis (Nov 1997) 41906; (Dec 1997) 41955
Supreme Court: Oviedo displinary action controversy (Oct 1997) 41857

PARIS CLUB *see* AID AGENCIES; DEBT

PERU
Appointments:
Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41582; (Jul 1997) 41730–1
Police (Apr 1997) 41582
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41956
Constitution:
Presidential term (May 1997) 41632; (Jun 1997) 41681
Violations (Jul 1997) 41730
Corruption:
Security forces (Apr 1997) 41582
Telephone tapping allegations (Jul 1997) 41730; (Aug 1997) 41768
Defence:
Armed forces
Leadership reshuffle (Dec 1997) 41956
Military exercises on Ecuador border (Sep 1997) 41812
Power struggle between army and president (Dec 1997) 41956
Disasters: Mud slide (Feb 1997) 41488
Dismissals:
Constitutional Tribunal judges (May 1997) 41632
Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41956
Economy: Budget (Sep 1997) 41812
Elections: Presidential (2000), Candidates (Sep 1997) 41811
Foreign relations:
APEC membership (Nov 1997) 41919
Canada (Feb 1997) 41488
Cuba (Mar 1997) 41533
Dominican Republic (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41533
Ecuador (May 1997) 41632; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Sep 1997) 41812; (Nov 1997) 41906
Japan (Jan 1997) 41438–9; (Feb 1997) 41488;

PERU (contd)
(Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41582; (May 1997) 41632
UK (Feb 1997) 41488
USA (Apr 1997) 41582; (Sep 1997) 41812
Foreign trade:
France (Aug 1997) 41768
Withdrawal from Andean Group (Apr 1997) 41585
Human rights: (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41582–3; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Jul 1997) 41730
Media:
Telephone tapping allegations (Jul 1997) 41730; (Aug 1997) 41768
TV station owner Ivcher deprived of Peruvian nationality (Sep 1997) 41812
Organisation of American States (OAS): (Jun 1997) 41681; 41682–3
Petroleum: Halting of oil exploration because of pressure from guerrillas (Aug 1997) 41768
Political parties: (Sep 1997) 41811
Political realignments: (Sep 1997) 41811
President:
Citizenship status question (Jul 1997) 41730
Hostage crisis ended by military assault (Apr 1997) 41582
Meeting with Japanese Prime Minister (Jan 1997) 41438
Political crisis (Jun 1997) 41680–1; (Jul 1997) 41730
Power struggle with army (Dec 1997) 41956
Presidential term legislation (May 1997) 41632; (Jun 1997) 41681
State of the nation address (Jul 1997) 41730
Unpopularity of Fujimori (Sep 1997) 41811
Visit to UK (Feb 1997) 41488
Resignations:
Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41582; (Jul 1997) 41730–1
Police (Apr 1997) 41582
Security:
see also Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas; Tupac Amarú Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)
Anti-government protests (Jun 1997) 41680–1; (Jul 1997) 41730
Bombing in Lima (Sep 1997) 41812
Ecuador border incident (May 1997) 41632
"Executions" of guerrillas reported (Apr 1997) 41582–3
Hostage crisis in Japanese embassy (Jan 1997) 41438–9; (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41582–3; (May 1997) 41632
National Intelligence Service (SIE) (May 1997) 41632; (Jun 1997) 41681; (Jul 1997) 41730
Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas:
Arrests of senior leaders (Aug 1997) 41768; (Sep 1997) 41812
Attacks (May 1997) 41632
Trials:
National Intelligence Service (SIE) members for torture (May 1997) 41632
Officials responsible for security lapses leading to hostage crisis (May 1997) 41632
Tupac Amarú Revolutionary Movement (MRTA):
Capture of guerrillas alleged by government (Mar 1997) 41533
Hostage crisis (Jan 1997) 41438–9; (Feb 1997) 41488; (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41582–3; (May 1997) 41632

PETROLEUM
see also ENVIRONMENT, Oil spills; ORGANISATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC)
Albania: (Dec 1997) 41979
Azerbaijan: (Jul 1997) 41739; (Aug 1997) 41788; (Sep 1997) 41837; (Nov 1997) 41922
Brazil: (Mar 1997) 41532
China-Vietnam dispute: (Nov 1997) 41917
Iraq: *see* UNITED NATIONS, Iraq
Kazakhstan: (Mar 1997) 41542; (Oct 1997) 41867; (Nov 1997) 41912
Nigeria: Shell oil well closures (Apr 1997) 41577
Peru: (Aug 1997) 41768

PETROLEUM (contd)
Philippines (Oct 1997) 41869–70; (Nov 1997) 41919
Prices: (Jan 1997) 41472
Russia: Chechyna pipeline (Aug 1997) 41786–7; (Sep 1997) 41837; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Turkmenistan: (Oct 1997) 41866
Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan dispute: (Jul 1997) 41739; (Aug 1997) 41788; (Oct 1997) 41866
World Petroleum Congress (WPC): (Oct 1997) 41893

PHILIPPINES
Appointments:
Military (Dec 1997) 41962
Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41824
Stock exchange president (Apr 1997) 41595–6
Armed forces: Chief of staff (Dec 1997) 41962
Constitution: (Jun 1997) 41685; (Jul 1997) 41735; (Sep 1997) 41824
Corruption:
Marcos gold allegations (Oct 1997) 41869
Stock exchange insider trading (Mar 1997) 41546; (Apr 1997) 41595–6
Swiss agreement on return of Marcos assets (Dec 1997) 41962
Drugs: Anti-trafficking agreement with Burma (Oct 1997) 41870
Economy:
Austerity plan (Dec 1997) 41962
Central bank (Jul 1997) 41735
Currency difficulties/devaluation (Jul 1997) 41735
Financial crisis (Oct 1997) 41861; (Dec 1997) 41962
IMF (Jul 1997) 41735
Petroleum prices (Oct 1997) 41869–70; (Nov 1997) 41919
Privatisation (Nov 1997) 41919
Stock exchange (Mar 1997) 41546; (Apr 1997) 41595–6
Elections:
Presidential, Candidates (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41735; (Aug 1997) 41778; (Sep 1997) 41824; (Dec 1997) 41962
Provincial (May 1997) 41643
Foreign relations:
Burma (Oct 1997) 41870
China, Spratly Islands dispute (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41686
Korea, South (Mar 1997) 41539
Singapore (Jun 1997) 41686
Switzerland (Dec 1997) 41962
Lakas ng Edsa/National Union of Christian Democrats (NUCD): Presidential candidates (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41735; (Aug 1997) 41778; (Sep 1997) 41824; (Dec 1997) 41962
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF):
Ceasefire agreement (Nov 1997) 41919
Fighting (Jun 1997) 41686
Hostages taken (Jun 1997) 41686
Links with foreign gunmen (Oct 1997) 41870
Peace talks (Jan 1997) 41451; (Jul 1997) 41735
Suspension of peace negotiations (Jun 1997) 41686
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41686
President:
Endorsement of successor (Dec 1997) 41962
Second term rejected by
Supreme Court (Jun 1997) 41686
Commission on Elections (Jul 1997) 41735
Demonstrators (Sep 1997) 41824
Ramos linked to Marcos gold (Oct 1997) 41869
Visit to Burma (Oct 1997) 41870
Religious affairs: Shari'ah law public executions banned (Nov 1997) 41919
Resignations:
Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41778
Police chief (Dec 1997) 41962
Stock exchange officials (Mar 1997) 41546
Security:
see also Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB) (Oct 1997) 41870
Arrest of guerrilla leaders (Oct 1997) 41869

PHILIPPINES (contd)
Attack on military camp by Arab gunmen (Oct 1997) 41870
Bombings in Manila (Sep 1997) 41824
Demonstrations against constitutional amendments (Sep 1997) 41824
Election violence (May 1997) 41643
Kidnappings (Dec 1997) 41962
New People's Army (NPA)
Attacks (Nov 1997) 41919
Government talks with (Dec 1997) 41962
Revolutionary Proletarian Party (RPP) (Oct 1997) 41870
Strikes (Oct 1997) 41869
Struggle of the Nationalist Filipino Masses (LMMP) political group: (Jun 1997) 41686
Supreme Court rulings:
Oil industry (Oct 1997) 41869–70; (Nov 1997) 41919
Presidential term (Jun 1997) 41685

PLO *see* PALESTINIAN ORGANISATIONS, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

POLAND
Abortion:
Constitution draft condemned by Catholic Church (May 1997) 41656; (Jun 1997) 41707
Law amended to 1993 position (Dec 1997) 41976
Appointments:
Military (Mar 1997) 41553
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41460; (Feb 1997) 41510–11; (Mar 1997) 41553; (Apr 1997) 41608; (Oct 1997) 41872
Armed forces: Appointments (Mar 1997) 41553
Arms trade with: Israel (Oct 1997) 41872
Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN): (May 1997) 41657
Conservative People's Party (SKL): Formed (Jan 1997) 41460–1
Constitution:
Disclosure of officials' and politicians' ties with former security services legislation (Apr 1997) 41608
Draft approved (Apr 1997) 41608
Referendum (May 1997) 41656–7; (Jul 1997) 41751
Council of Ministers: (Oct 1997) 41872
Death penalty: Abolition (Mar 1997) 41553; (Jul 1997) 41750–1
Defence: NATO membership preparations (Nov 1997) 41931
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD): (Jun 1997) 41707; (Aug 1997) 41792; (Sep 1997) 41831–2; (Oct 1997) 41872
Disasters: Flooding on Polish-German border (Jul 1997) 41750; (Aug 1997) 41792
Economy:
Disaster relief (Jul 1997) 41750; (Aug 1997) 41792
European Union (EU) flood aid (Jul 1997) 41750
Gdansk shipyard closure (Mar 1997) 41553
Pensions reform (Feb 1997) 41511
Privatisation (Feb 1997) 41511
World Bank (Jul 1997) 41750
Elections:
Announcement (Jun 1997) 41707
Results (Sep 1997) 41831–2
European Union (EU) membership question: (Dec 1997) 41968
Foreign relations:
Baltic states (May 1997) 41657
France (Nov 1997) 41931
Francophonie group of countries (Nov 1997) 41940
Germany (Nov 1997) 41931
Israel (Oct 1997) 41872
Moldova (Dec 1997) 41978
Ukraine (May 1997) 41657
USA (Apr 1997) 41608; (Jul 1997) 41757
Freedom Union (UW): (Oct 1997) 41872; (Nov 1997) 41931
Polish Peasant Party (PSL): (Mar 1997) 41553; (Apr 1997) 41608; (Aug 1997) 41792; (Sep 1997) 41831–2; (Oct 1997) 41872

POLAND (contd)
Political crisis (Aug 1997) 41792
Political parties: (Jan 1997) 41460; (Sep 1997) 41831–2
President:
Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Visits to
Moldova (Dec 1997) 41978
Ukraine (May 1997) 41657
Prime Minister:
Buzek's government programme (Nov 1997) 41930–1
PSL no-confidence motion (Aug 1997) 41792
Visit to USA (Apr 1997) 41608
Religious affairs:
see also Abortion
Papal visit (Jun 1997) 41707
Resignations: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41511; (Mar 1997) 41553
Security: Demonstrations and violence (Mar 1997) 41553
Solidarity Electoral Alliance (AWS): (Sep 1997) 41831–2; (Oct 1997) 41872; (Nov 1997) 41931
Supreme Court: Constitution referendum ruling (Jul 1997) 41751
Trials: Wujek mine shootings (1981) (Nov 1997) 41931
Walesa:
Criticism of Wujek mine shootings trial verdict (Nov 1997) 41931
Formation of new party (Oct 1997) 41872; (Dec 1997) 41977

PORTUGAL
Appointments: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41926
Cabinet: (Nov 1997) 41926
Corruption: Vitorino (Nov 1997) 41926
Economy: Fisheries (Jun 1997) 41698
Elections: Local (Dec 1997) 41970
European Union (EU): Multi-speed Europe (Jan 1997) 41468
Floods: (Nov 1997) 41926
Foreign relations:
Indonesia (May 1997) 41644
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
South Africa (Aug 1997) 41758
Racial issues: *see* Trials
Resignations: Ministerial (Nov 1997) 41926
Security: Fishing protest (Jun 1997) 41698
Social Democratic Party: (Dec 1997) 41970
Socialist Party (PS): (Dec 1997) 41970
Trials: Racist murder convictions (Jun 1997) 41698
War crimes: Nazi gold dealings investigation (Apr 1997) 41612; (Jul 1997) 41757

Q

QATAR
Amir:
Reconciliation with his deposed father (Jan 1997) 41473
Visit to USA (Jun 1997) 41716
Foreign relations:
Bahrain (Mar 1997) 41568–9
USA (Jun 1997) 41716
Foreign trade: Israel (Mar 1997) 41566
Resignations: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41716
Trials: February 1996 coup attempt (Nov 1997) 41940

R

RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT *see* INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS/CRESCENT (ICRC)

REFUGEES
see also IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION:
Asylum issues; UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)
Burundi:
Allegations of ill-treatment in Tanzanian camps (Nov 1997) 41897

REFUGEES (contd)
Dangerous conditions in camps (Apr 1997) 41574
Expulsion from Tanzania (Oct 1997) 41851
From fighting in Makamba (Apr 1997) 41574
Massacres of returnees from Tanzania (Jan 1997) 41432
To Tanzania (Jul 1997) 41721
Chad: Return promises (Oct 1997) 41852
Croatia: Serbian (Jun 1997) 41705; (Jul 1997) 41749
Eritrea: Repatriation (May 1997) 41627
Ethiopia: Returnees from Sudan (Jun 1997) 41674
From:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41558; (May 1997) 41654; (Dec 1997) 41979
Bhutan (Apr 1997) 41588
Burma (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41545
Burundi (Jul 1997) 41721
Cambodia (Dec 1997) 41961
Colombia (Jul 1997) 41732
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre) (Aug 1997) 41761; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848
Kenya (Mar 1997) 41526
Senegal (Sep 1997) 41803
Somalia (Mar 1997) 41526; (Jun 1997) 41674
Turkey (Kurds) (Dec 1997) 41973
Iran: (Jan 1997) 41472
Rwanda:
Forced repatriation from Congo, Democratic Republic of (Aug 1997) 41761; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848
Massacres of ethnic Tutsis (Aug 1997) 41761; (Dec 1997) 41947
Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy to Rwanda (RDR) (Jun 1997) 41669
Sudan:
Repatriation from (Mar 1997) 41526
Southern civil war (Jan 1997) 41433
Tajikistan returnees: (Jan 1997) 41452; (Nov 1997) 41913
To:
Ethiopia (Mar 1997) 41526; (Jun 1997) 41674
Gambia (Sep 1997) 41803
India (Apr 1997) 41588
Italy (Mar 1997) 41558; (May 1997) 41654; (Dec 1997) 41973; 41979
Nepal (Apr 1997) 41588
Panama (Jul 1997) 41732
Tanzania (Jul 1997) 41721
Thailand (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41545; (Dec 1997) 41961
Vietnamese boat people: Hong Kong detention camp closed (Jan 1997) 41447
Zaïre:
see also Rwanda
Conditions (Feb 1997) 41477
Kabila call for repatriation to Rwanda (Mar 1997) 41526
Presence of Interahamwe and armed extremist Hutus (Feb 1997) 41477
UN plan to repatriate (Apr 1997) 41573

ROMANIA
Alliance for Romania (APR): (Jun 1997) 41706; (Aug 1997) 41791
Appointments:
Military intelligence chief (Aug 1997) 41791
Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41977–8
Prosecutor general (Aug 1997) 41791
Arms trade: Suspension of helicopter purchase from USA (Aug 1997) 41791
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41977–8
Corruption: Former Defence Minister charged (May 1997) 41655
Defence: Agreement with Hungary (Feb 1997) 41511
Disasters: Explosion of "experimental" bomb (Jul 1997) 41754
Economy:
Budget (Apr 1997) 41606
Flood damage to harvest (Aug 1997) 41791
IMF/World Bank (Apr 1997) 41606–7; (May

ROMANIA (contd)
1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41706; (Aug 1997) 41791
Privatisation policy (Apr 1997) 41606–7; (Aug 1997) 41791
Reform package (Feb 1997) 41511; (May 1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41706
Tax concessions question (Oct 1997) 41873
Trade unions (May 1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41706; (Aug 1997) 41791
Education: (Dec 1997) 41978
Espionage: (Jul 1997) 41754
European Union (EU) membership ambitions: (Oct 1997) 41874; 41876; (Dec 1997) 41968
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41558
Bulgaria (Oct 1997) 41876
Hungary
Ciorbea's visit to Hungary (Mar 1997) 41558
Defence agreement (Feb 1997) 41511
Horn's visit to Romania (Oct 1997) 41874
President Goncz's visit to Romania (May 1997) 41655
Romanian education law amendments (Dec 1997) 41978
Switzerland (Jul 1997) 41754
Turkey (Oct 1997) 41876
Ukraine (Jun 1997) 41705–6
USA (Jul 1997) 41757
Foreign trade: Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) (Apr 1997) 41607
Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (HDUR): Suspension of co-operation with other coalition parties (Dec 1997) 41978
NATO membership ambitions: (Feb 1997) 41511; (Apr 1997) 41607; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Oct 1997) 41874; 41876
Political parties: (May 1997) 41655; (Sep 1997) 41832; (Dec 1997) 41978
President: Summit with Presidents of Turkey and Bulgaria (Oct 1997) 41876
Prime Minister:
No-confidence motion tabled against government of Ciorbea (May 1997) 41655
Visit to Hungary (Mar 1997) 41558
Resignations:
Intelligence Agency director (Apr 1997) 41607
Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41978
Romanian Workers' Party (PMR): Name change to Romanian Communist Party (PCR) (Nov 1997) 41934
Security:
Arrest of miners' leader (Jan 1997) 41461
Demonstrations (Aug 1997) 41791; (Oct 1997) 41873–4
Intelligence agency (Apr 1997) 41607
Securitate files to be opened (Oct 1997) 41874
Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR):
Opposition alliance talks (Sep 1997) 41832
Resignation of government called for (Oct 1997) 41873
Split (Jun 1997) 41706
Socialist Labour Party (PSM): Resignation of government called for (Oct 1997) 41873

RUSHDIE, SALMAN, Iran: (Feb 1997) 41520

RUSSIA
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Agrarian Party of Russia (APR): (Mar 1997) 41550
All-Russian Movement in Support of the Army, Military Science, and the Defence Industry: (Sep 1997) 41837
Appointments:
Chechnya (Feb 1997) 41508
Consultative Council (Jul 1997) 41753
Deputy Prime Ministers (Feb 1997) 41507; (May 1997) 41658; (Dec 1997) 41974
Duma Deputy Speaker (Sep 1997) 41837
European Court on Human Rights (Apr 1997) 41609
Financial departments (Nov 1997) 41921
Gazprom panel (Dec 1997) 41974

RUSSIA (contd)
Judicial (Feb 1997) 41507; (Mar 1997) 41549; (Jun 1997) 41709
Military (Nov 1997) 41922; (Dec 1997) 41974
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41549; (Apr 1997) 41609; (Jul 1997) 41752; (Aug 1997) 41786; (Nov 1997) 41921
Arms trade:
Deals with
Cyprus (Jan 1997) 41461; (Sep 1997) 41835
Indonesia (Aug 1997) 41778
Landmines (Sep 1997) 41845
Reorganisation of state arms trading company (Aug 1997) 41786
Aviation:
Aeroflot (Jun 1997) 41708
Air crashes (Mar 1997) 41550; (Dec 1997) 41975
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41549; (Nov 1997) 41920–1
Chechnya:
Bombings of railway stations in southern Russia (Apr 1997) 41610
Elections (Jan 1997) 41458
Executions (Sep 1997) 41837
Government appointments (Feb 1997) 41508
Grozny, Renamed Dzhokhar Ghala (Jan 1997) 41458
Kidnapping of journalists (May 1997) 41659; (Aug 1997) 41787
Oil pipeline (Aug 1997) 41786–7; (Sep 1997) 41837; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
OSCE monitoring of elections (Jan 1997) 41458
Peace negotiations (Apr 1997) 41610
Peace treaty signed (May 1997) 41659
President, Transfer of some responsibilities (Dec 1997) 41975
Sharia law (Sep 1997) 41837
Withdrawal of Russian troops (Jan 1997) 41458
Yeltsin-Maskhadov (Chechen president) meeting (Aug 1997) 41786–7
Chemical weapons: (Apr 1997) 41617; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Nov 1997) 41941
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS):
Summit (Mar 1997) 41552
Yeltsin state of the nation address (Mar 1997) 41549
Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF): (Jan 1997) 41456; (Mar 1997) 41550; (Jun 1997) 41708; (Dec 1997) 41974
Constitution:
Chechnya question (May 1997) 41659
Constitutional Court (Feb 1997) 41507; (Mar 1997) 41549; (Apr 1997) 41609; (Jun 1997) 41709; (Sep 1997) 41837
Freedom of religion question (Sep 1997) 41837
Presidential powers (Jan 1997) 41456
Presidential representatives in regions (Jul 1997) 41753
Corruption:
Defence department (May 1997) 41658; (Jun 1997) 41708; (Dec 1997) 41975
Financial scandals (Jul 1997) 41752
Justice Minister Kovalyov (Jun 1997) 41708
Privatisation auctions scandal (Aug 1997) 41785–6
Privatisation book scandal (Nov 1997) 41920–1
Yeltsin election campaign aides (Apr 1997) 41609
Council of Europe: Russia-France-Germany annual summits planned (Oct 1997) 41887
Death penalty: (Apr 1997) 41610; (Sep 1997) 41837
Defence:
see also Nuclear issues
All-Russian Movement in Support of the Army, Military Science, and the Defence Industry (Jul 1997) 41753
Armed forces
Chaotic state (Feb 1997) 41507; (Jun 1997) 41708
Killing sprees by private soldiers (Jun 1997) 41708
Reductions (Feb 1997) 41507; (Dec 1997) 41974
Reform (May 1997) 41658; (Jul 1997) 41753
Withdrawals from
RUSSIA (contd)
Chechnya (Jan 1997) 41458
Dnestr (Apr 1997) 41611
Belarus co-operation treaty (Dec 1997) 41976
Kazakhstan-US-Russia military exercises (Sep 1997) 41818
Kyrgyzstan co-operation agreement (Oct 1997) 41867
Military dismissals (May 1997) 41657–8
Military inspectorate created (Aug 1997) 41786
National security guidelines (Dec 1997) 41975
NATO
Enlargement fears (Feb 1997) 41521; (Mar 1997) 41549; 41569; (Apr 1997) 41617; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Sep 1997) 41839
Russia-NATO Founding Act on Mutual Relations (May 1997) 41657; 41665; (Dec 1997) 41974
Navy
Commander-in-chief (Nov 1997) 41922
Cuts (Jul 1997) 41753
Manoeuvres with Ukraine (Oct 1997) 41878–9
Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) (Mar 1997) 41569; (Dec 1997) 41974
Democratic Party of Russia (DPR): Leadership (Mar 1997) 41550
Disasters: Coal mine explosion (Dec 1997) 41975
Dismissals:
Military (May 1997) 41657–8
Ministerial (May 1997) 41657; (Jul 1997) 41753; (Nov 1997) 41920–1
Drugs: Arrest of Federal Security Service officials for trafficking (Feb 1997) 41507
Duma:
Budget debate (Nov 1997) 41921; (Dec 1997) 41974
First Deputy Speaker (Sep 1997) 41837
Privatisation book scandal (Nov 1997) 41921
Vote on Yeltsin's health (Feb 1997) 41507
Economy:
Agriculture (May 1997) 41658
Banking (Jul 1997) 41752; (Sep 1997) 41836
Budget (Jan 1997) 41457; (Feb 1997) 41508; (May 1997) 41658; (Jun 1997) 41707–8; (Aug 1997) 41786; (Oct 1997) 41879–80; (Nov 1997) 41921; (Dec 1997) 41974
Budget crisis (Apr 1997) 41609
Central bank (Nov 1997) 41921
Corruption allegations (Jul 1997) 41752
Currency (Aug 1997) 41786; (Nov 1997) 41921
Debt restructuring (Oct 1997) 41880
Diamond trade (Oct 1997) 41880
Energy companies (Apr 1997) 41609; (May 1997) 41658; (Jun 1997) 41708; (Nov 1997) 41921; (Dec 1997) 41974
Gazprom reform measures (May 1997) 41658; (Dec 1997) 41974
IMF/World Bank (Feb 1997) 41508; (Apr 1997) 41609; (Jun 1997) 41708; (Oct 1997) 41880; (Dec 1997) 41975
Inflation (Jan 1997) 41457
Land ownership (Nov 1997) 41922; (Dec 1997) 41974
Paris Club membership (Mar 1997) 41569; (Sep 1997) 41836; (Dec 1997) 41981
Privatisation (Jul 1997) 41752; (Aug 1997) 41785–6; (Sep 1997) 41836; (Nov 1997) 41920–1
Reform measures (Apr 1997) 41608–9
Soros gift (Oct 1997) 41880
Taxation (Jun 1997) 41707–8; (Oct 1997) 41880; (Nov 1997) 41921; (Dec 1997) 41974
Trade unions (Mar 1997) 41548–50; (May 1997) 41658–9
Elections:
By-elections
Duma (Mar 1997) 41550
Tula oblast (Feb 1997) 41507
Chechnya (Jan 1997) 41458
Gubernatorial (Jan 1997) 41457; (Feb 1997) 41508; (Mar 1997) 41550; (Jul 1997) 41753; (Oct 1997) 41880; (Nov 1997) 41922
Local (Jan 1997) 41457; (Dec 1997) 41975
State Duma by-elections (Jun 1997) 41708
Energy:
RUSSIA (contd)
Azerbaijan oil agreement difficulties (Aug 1997) 41788; (Sep 1997) 41837
British Petroleum-Sidanco gas agreement (Nov 1997) 41921
Gas supplies to
Armenia (Aug 1997) 41787–8; (Oct 1997) 41877
Bulgaria (Oct 1997) 41876
China (Nov 1997) 41912
Georgia (Dec 1997) 41974–5
Turkey (Dec 1997) 41973
Gazprom panel (Dec 1997) 41974
Oil pipeline through Chechnya (Aug 1997) 41786–7; (Sep 1997) 41837; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Oil refineries (Dec 1997) 41974
Shell-Gazprom agreement (Nov 1997) 41921
Environment: Whaling (Oct 1997) 41892
Espionage: Expulsion of Iranian embassy employee (Nov 1997) 41939
Federation Council: Rejection of Constitutional Court judge nomination (Mar 1997) 41549
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (Jun 1997) 41693; (Dec 1997) 41966
Antigua and Barbuda (Feb 1997) 41491
Armenia (Aug 1997) 41787–8
Baltic states (Nov 1997) 41924
Belarus
Arrest and trial of Russian journalists (Jul 1997) 41751; (Aug 1997) 41785; (Sep 1997) 41838; (Dec 1997) 41976
Cancellation of Presidential visit to Russia (Oct 1997) 41879
Defence treaty (Dec 1997) 41976
Integration moves (Jan 1997) 41459; (Mar 1997) 41550–1
Release of detained journalist (Oct 1997) 41879
Restrictions on Russian journalists (Mar 1997) 41550
Union budget (Dec 1997) 41976
Union treaty signed (May 1996) 41659; (Apr 1997) 41610; (Jun 1997) 41709
China (Apr 1997) 41589; (Jun 1997) 41690; (Nov 1997) 41911–12
Cuba (Jun 1997) 41682
Estonia, Refusal of Russia to sign border agreement (Jan 1997) 41459–60
Georgia
Abkhazia peace plan (Aug 1997) 41787
Border dispute (Dec 1997) 41973
Germany
Kohl-Yeltsin meeting (Apr 1997) 41610
Return of plundered German art controversy (Apr 1997) 41610; (May 1997) 41659
Space mission (Feb 1997) 41522
Iran (Nov 1997) 41939
Iraq (Nov 1997) 41938
Israel (Mar 1997) 41566; (Oct 1997) 41891
Italy (Nov 1997) 41928
Japan
Informal summit (Nov 1997) 41908–9
Kurile islands dispute (May 1997) 41640; (Jun 1997) 41687; (Nov 1997) 41909
Kazakhstan (Sep 1997) 41818; (Oct 1997) 41867
Korea, South (Aug 1997) 41773
Kyrgyzstan
Border guards agreement (Mar 1997) 41542
Military co-operation agreement (Oct 1997) 41867
Lithuania (Oct 1997) 41881; (Nov 1997) 41924
Middle East peace process (Oct 1997) 41891
Moldova, Dnestr (Apr 1997) 41611; (May 1997) 41660
Palestinians (Feb 1997) 41518
Slovakia (Apr 1997) 41607
Tajikistan (Jan 1997) 41452; (Mar 1997) 41542
Ukraine
Ban on Russian military flights (Apr 1997) 41611
Black Sea fleet (May 1997) 41659–60
Failure of Ukraine legislature to ratify

RUSSIA (contd)
agreement on division of Soviet assets (Feb 1997) 41509
Military co-operation talks (Aug 1997) 41787
Naval manoeuvres (Oct 1997) 41878–9
Presidential summit (Nov 1997) 41922–3
Sevastopol tensions (Jan 1997) 41459
Treaty signed (May 1997) 41659–60
USA
Mir-USA-Russia space mission (Apr 1997) 41618; (May 1997) 41666; (Jun 1997) 41718; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41845
NATO enlargement (Feb 1997) 41521
Vietnam (Nov 1997) 41916
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (Dec 1997) 41978
Foreign trade:
Armenia (Aug 1997) 41787–8; (Oct 1997) 41877
Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) entry question (Nov 1997) 41909; 41919
Azerbaijan (May 1997) 41659; (Aug 1997) 41788; (Sep 1997) 41837; (Oct 1997) 41878
Bulgaria (Oct 1997) 41876
China (Nov 1997) 41912
Cyprus (Jan 1997) 41461
Czech Republic, Energy supplies (Mar 1997) 41553
Georgia, Gas pipeline agreement (Dec 1997) 41973–4
Indonesia (Aug 1997) 41778
Iran (Sep 1997) 41842
Iraq (Mar 1997) 41567
Israel (Mar 1997) 41566
Netherlands (Nov 1997) 41921
Paris Club/World Trade Organisation membership questions (Mar 1997) 41569; (Sep 1997) 41836
Slovakia (Apr 1997) 41607
Turkey (Dec 1997) 41973
UK (Nov 1997) 41921
Ukraine (Nov 1997) 41922–3
USA (Oct 1997) 41855
Health:
Deaths from fake vodka (Jun 1997) 41709
Falling life expectancy (Jun 1997) 41709
Human rights: (Apr 1997) 41610
Lebed: Founding of Russian People's Republican Party (RPRP) (Mar 1997) 41550
Lenin: Proposal to bury (Jun 1997) 41709
Media:
Censorship accusations (Apr 1997) 41610
Journalists' difficulties in Belarus (Mar 1997) 41550; (Jul 1997) 41751; (Aug 1997) 41785
Nuclear issues:
Disarmament targets (START-II and START-III) (Dec 1997) 41974
Weapons
Anxieties about weapons capability (Feb 1997) 41507
Lack of funding (Jun 1997) 41708
Policy (Feb 1997) 41507; (Dec 1997) 41974
Purchase of US IBM computers alleged (Oct 1997) 41855
Standing down of NATO-targeted nuclear warheads (May 1997) 41665
Obituary of Sinyavsky (dissident): (Feb 1997) 41508
Our Home is Russia faction: (Jan 1997) 41456; (Aug 1997) 41786
Political parties: (Jan 1997) 41457
President:
Advisers arrested on corruption charges (Apr 1997) 41609
Banking and the economy (Sep 1997) 41836
Chechnya peace treaty (May 1997) 41659

CIS summits (Mar 1997) 41552; (Oct 1997) 41880–1
Compromise with opposition to deflect no confidence motion (Oct 1997) 41879–80
Consultative Council (Jul 1997) 41753
Georgia-Abkhazia peace talks (Aug 1997) 41787
Health (Jan 1997) 41456–7; (Feb 1997) 41507; (Mar 1997) 41548; (Jun 1997) 41708; (Dec 1997) 41974

CIS summits (Mar 1997) 41552; (Oct 1997) 41880–1 (contd)
Helsinki NATO summit (Mar 1997) 41569
Impeachment proceedings (Jan 1997) 41456
Meetings with
Chechen president (Aug 1997) 41786–7
Chinese President (Apr 1997) 41589
German Chancellor (Apr 1997) 41610; 41617
Japanese Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41909
Lithuanian President (Oct 1997) 41881
Ukrainian President (May 1997) 41659–60; (Nov 1997) 41922–3
US President (Mar 1997) 41569
Nepotism allegations (Jun 1997) 41708
Nominee to Constitutional Court rejected (Apr 1997) 41609
Nuclear disarmament statements (Dec 1997) 41974
Presidential representatives in regions increased power (Jul 1997) 41753
Rumours of cabinet reshuffle (Feb 1997) 41507
State of the nation address (Mar 1997) 41548–9
Union Charter with Belarus signed (May 1997) 41659
Vetoes
Freedom of religion law (Jul 1997) 41753
Return of plundered German art controversy (May 1997) 41659
Visits to
China (Nov 1997) 41911–12
Sweden (Dec 1997) 41974
Ukraine (May 1997) 41659–60
Prime Minister:
Address to Duma on economic programme (May 1997) 41658
Visits to
China (Jun 1997) 41690
Kazakhstan (Oct 1997) 41867
Slovakia (Apr 1997) 41607
Vietnam (Nov 1997) 41916
Primorsky krai (far eastern region):
Dispute between government and Governor Nazdratenko (Jun 1997) 41708
Energy crisis (May 1997) 41658–9; (Jun 1997) 41708
Local elections (Dec 1997) 41975
State of emergency (May 1997) 41658–9; (Jun 1997) 41708
Racial issues: Siberia tribes (Oct 1997) 41892
Religious affairs:
Freedom of religion law (Jun 1997) 41709; (Jul 1997) 41753; (Sep 1997) 41837
Roman Catholic Church (Jun 1997) 41709; (Jul 1997) 41753
Russian Orthodox Church (Jun 1997) 41709; (Jul 1997) 41753
Resignations:
Deputy Prime Minister (Aug 1997) 41785–6
Federal Border Guard director (Dec 1997) 41974
Our Home is Russia (NDR) faction leader (Aug 1997) 41786
Russian All-People's Union (RAPU): (Mar 1997) 41550
Russian People's Republican Party (RPRP):
Founding congress (Mar 1997) 41550
Russia's Democratic Choice:
Resignation of Belyayev from NDR faction (Aug 1997) 41786
Tula by-election (Feb 1997) 41507
St Petersburg: Assassination of Deputy Governor (Aug 1997) 41786
Security:
see also Chechnya
Anti-crime measures (Feb 1997) 41507
Bombings, Railway stations in southern Russia (Apr 1997) 41610
Dagestan, Guerrilla attack on Russian army base (Dec 1997) 41975
Federal Security Service (FSB) (Feb 1997) 41507
Justice Minister (Jul 1997) 41752
Killings, Deputy Governor of St Petersburg (Aug 1997) 41786; (Sep 1997) 41836
Primorsky krai/Vladivostok state of emergency (May 1997) 41658–9; (Jun 1997) 41708
Russian mafia

CIS summits (Mar 1997) 41552; (Oct 1997) 41880–1 (contd)
Offshore banks closed down in Antigua and Barbuda on money-laundering suspicions (Feb 1997) 41491
Summit in Italy (Mar 1997) 41559
Strikes (Mar 1997) 41548–50
Space research:
Mir (Apr 1997) 41618; (May 1997) 41666; (Jun 1997) 41718; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41845; (Oct 1997) 41893
Russian-German mission (Feb 1997) 41522
Vladivostock *see* Primorsky krai (far eastern region)
Yabloko faction: (Jan 1997) 41456; (Sep 1997) 41837; (Nov 1997) 41921

RWANDA
Commonwealth membership application: (Oct 1997) 41892
Death penalty: Genocide trials (Jan 1997) 41431; (Feb 1997) 41477; (May 1997) 41622
Dismissals: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41851
Economy: IMF loan (Apr 1997) 41574; (Dec 1997) 41947
Foreign relations:
Belgium (Apr 1997) 41574
Burundi (Sep 1997) 41801
France (Aug 1997) 41763; (Nov 1997) 41897
Zaïre
Kabila call for repatriation of refugees (Mar 1997) 41526
Welcome to Kabila regime (May 1997) 41621
Habyarimana (former President): Role in instigation of genocide alleged (Apr 1997) 41574
Human rights:
see also UN: Genocide tribunal
Allegations of new massacres (Nov 1997) 41897
France blamed for its role in genocide (Nov 1997) 41897
Government denial of allegations of massacres (Aug 1997) 41761
UN officials' concern at attacks on survivors of 1994 genocide (Mar 1997) 41525–6
Organisation of African Unity (OAU):
International investigation of 1994 genocide proposed (Nov 1997) 41897; (Dec 1997) 41950
Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy to Rwanda (RDR): (Jun 1997) 41669
Refugees:
Formation of political party (Jun 1997) 41669
From Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre) (Aug 1997) 41761; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Dec 1997) 41947
Killings of Tutsi refugees (Aug 1997) 41761; (Dec 1997) 41947
Security:
Army reprisals after Hutu murders (Jan 1997) 41431
Attack on prison to free Hutus held on genocide charges (Dec 1997) 41947
Gisenyi clashes between government troops and extremist Hutus (Oct 1997) 41851
International Red Cross withdrawal (Feb 1997) 41478
Killings
Canadian priest (Feb 1997) 41477–8
Ethnically motivated (Jun 1997) 41669; (Aug 1997) 41761
Ex-Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) soldiers (May 1997) 41622–3
Massacres by ex-FAR soldiers (May 1997) 41623
Médecins sans Frontières workers (Jan 1997) 41431
Tutsis by Hutus (Jan 1997) 41431; (Mar 1997) 41526; (Jun 1997) 41669; (Aug 1997) 41761; (Oct 1997) 41851; (Dec 1997) 41947
UN employees (Feb 1997) 41477–8
Trials: Genocide (Jan 1997) 41431; (Feb 1997) 41477; (May 1997) 41622; (Sep 1997) 41801
UN:
Genocide tribunal
Akayesu trial (Jan 1997) 41431
Arrest of Belgian journalist (Jul 1997) 41721

RWANDA (contd)
Arrests of leading suspects (Jul 1997) 41720–1
Extradition of suspect from Switzerland (Jun 1997) 41622
Intimidation of witnesses (Jan 1997) 41431
Nyiramasuko guilty plea (Sep 1997) 41801
Report on mismanagement of tribunal (Feb 1997) 41477
High Commissioner for Human Rights Field Operations in Rwanda (HRFOR) report (Aug 1997) 41761
High commissioner for human rights' visit (Dec 1997) 41947
Killing of employees (Feb 1997) 41477–8

S

SAARC *see* SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (SAARC)

SADC *see* SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

SAMOA, Name approved: (Jul 1997) 41741

SAN MARINO, Repeal of anti-homosexual legislation: (Jul 1997) 41754

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE, Foreign relations: Taiwan (May 1997) 41639

SAUDI ARABIA
Consultative Council:
Enlarged (Jul 1997) 41755
Resignation of Maj.-Gen. Shaykh (Nov 1997) 41936
Defence: Spending (Jan 1997) 41472
Economy:
Budget (Jan 1997) 41472; (Dec 1997) 41983
Petroleum prices (Jan 1997) 41472
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (May 1997) 41635
Australia (Sep 1997) 41841–2; (Oct 1997) 41889; (Nov 1997) 41936
Canada (Mar 1997) 41568; (May 1997) 41630
Iran (Jan 1997) 41473; (Jul 1997) 41756
Iraq (Apr 1997) 41613
Israel (Aug 1997) 41794
UK, Nurses' murder trial (Sep 1997) 41841–2; (Oct 1997) 41889; (Nov 1997) 41936
USA
Al-Khobar bomb investigation (Jan 1997) 41472–3; (Mar 1997) 41568; (Sep 1997) 41842
Visit by US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Visit of Defence Minister to USA (Mar 1997) 41568
Yemen
Aden bombings allegations (Dec 1997) 41980–1
Armed clashes (Jul 1997) 41755–6
Saudi TV interview with Yemeni separatist (Jul 1997) 41756
Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca): Fire deaths (Apr 1997) 41616
Human rights: (Nov 1997) 41936
Immigration and emigration: Expulsion of illegal workers (Oct 1997) 41889
Islamic Reform Movement of Saudi Arabia: (Nov 1997) 41936
Map: (Apr 1997) 41615
Obituary of Tariki (first Oil Minister and founder of OPEC): (Sep 1997) 41842
Petroleum: (Jul 1997) 41756
Security: Al-Khobar bomb investigation (Jan 1997) 41472–3
Sharia law: (Sep 1997) 41841–2
Trials: UK nurses in murder trial (Sep 1997) 41841–2; (Oct 1997) 41889; (Nov 1997) 41936

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
see also SPACE RESEARCH
Cloning developments: (Feb 1997) 41522; (Mar 1997) 41570

SENEGAL
Air crash: (Feb 1997) 41483
Casamance Movement of Democratic Forces (MFDC): (Aug 1997) 41763; (Sep 1997) 41803
Foreign relations:
France (Aug 1997) 41763
Gambia (Sep 1997) 41803
Refugees to Gambia: (Sep 1997) 41803
Security:
Government offensive against Casamance rebels (Sep 1997) 41803
Killing of separatist leader reported (later denied) (Aug 1997) 41763; (Sep 1997) 41803

SEYCHELLES, Membership of Southern African Development Community (SADC): (Sep 1997) 41805

SIERRA LEONE
Appointments: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41724; (Dec 1997) 49144
Armed forces: Coup (May 1997) 41625; (Jun 1997) 41672
Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC): (Jun 1997) 41672
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41724; (Dec 1997) 41944
Civil war: *see* Revolutionary United Front (RUF)
Commonwealth:
Coup condemned (May 1997) 41625
Suspension of Sierra Leone (Jul 1997) 41725; (Oct 1997) 41892
Dismissals: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41944
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):
Absence from summit (Aug 1997) 41763
ECOMOG peacekeeping efforts (Jun 1997) 41672; (Jul 1997) 41724; (Aug 1997) 41763; (Sep 1997) 41803
Peace agreement signed (Oct 1997) 41849
Sanctions (Oct 1997) 41850
Foreign relations:
France (May 1997) 41626
Guinea (May 1997) 41626; (Jun 1997) 41672
Lebanon (May 1997) 41626
Nigeria (May 1997) 41625; (Jun 1997) 41672; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41849–50
USA (May 1997) 41626
Map: (May 1997) 41626
President:
Kabbah
Ousted in military coup (May 1997) 41625
Reinstatement promised in peace agreement (Oct 1997) 41849
Koroma
Assumption of Presidency (May 1997) 41625; (Jun 1997) 41672; (Jul 1997) 41724
Offer to meet Kabbah (Sep 1997) 41803
Peace agreement offer of freedom from prosecution (Oct 1997) 41849
Revolutionary United Front (RUF):
Cabinet members (Dec 1997) 41944
Leadership dispute (Apr 1997) 41577
Peace process, Violations of peace agreement (Mar 1997) 41528–9
Sankoh
Alliance with Koroma (Jun 1997) 41672
Future role (Oct 1997) 41849
Ousted (Mar 1997) 41529
Security:
see also Revolutionary United Front (RUF)
Ceasefire agreement between ECOWAS and Koroma troops (Jul 1997) 41724
Chaos and lawlessness following military coup (Jun 1997) 41672
Disarmament agreement (Dec 1997) 41945
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping efforts (Jun 1997) 41672; (Jul 1997) 41724; (Aug 1997) 41763; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41849–50; (Dec 1997) 41945
Nigerian bombardment of Freetown in response to violation of ECOWAS embargo (Sep 1997) 41803
Riot over alleged destruction of US visa applications (Feb 1997) 41483

SIERRA LEONE (contd)
UN:
Condemnation of Koroma coup (May 1997) 41625
Koroma offer to meet Kabbah (ousted president) (Sep 1997) 41803
Peacekeeping forces (Jun 1997) 41672
Sanctions (Oct 1997) 41850

SINGAPORE
Appointments:
Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41450
Monetary Authority of Singapore (Dec 1997) 41968
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41450
Economy:
Budget (Jul 1997) 41735
Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) (Dec 1997) 41968
Elections: Legislative (Jan 1997) 41449–50
Foreign relations:
China (Nov 1997) 41911
Malaysia (Mar 1997) 41546
Philippines (Jun 1997) 41686
Taiwan (Nov 1997) 41911
Human rights: (Nov 1997) 41918
People's Action Party (PAP): General election success (Jan 1997) 41449–50
Prime Minister:
Goh libelled by Workers' Party (Mar 1997) 41546; (Jun 1997) 41685; (Aug 1997) 41777–8; (Sep 1997) 41823; (Nov 1997) 41918
Visits to
Philippines (Jun 1997) 41686
Taiwan (Nov 1997) 41911
Singapore Democratic Party (SDP): (Jan 1997) 41450
Singapore People's Party: (Jan 1997) 41450
Trials: Defamation trial of opposition leader (Aug 1997) 41777–8; (Sep 1997) 41823
Workers' Party (WP):
Amnesty International and ICJ criticism of Prime Minister over libel action (Nov 1997) 41918
General election (Jan 1997) 41449–50
Libel of Prime Minister (Mar 1997) 41546; (Jun 1997) 41685; (Nov 1997) 41918
Tang's flight to Malaysia (Jan 1997) 41450; (Mar 1997) 41546
Trial of Jeyaretnam (secretary-general of party) for criminal defamation (Aug 1997) 41777–8; (Sep 1997) 41823

SLOVAKIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41706; (Dec 1997) 41977
Constitution:
Constitutional Court ruling on presidential term (Dec 1997) 41977
Expulsion of HZDS deputy from National Council unconstitutional (Oct 1997) 41873
Referendum on direct presidential elections crisis (Apr 1997) 41607; (May 1997) 41656; (Jun 1997) 41706
Dismissals: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41607
Economy:
Banking crisis (Dec 1997) 41977
Budget (Nov 1997) 41931; (Dec 1997) 41977
Central bank (Dec 1997) 41977
Energy (Mar 1997) 41553
Privatisation (Jun 1997) 41706
Emigration and immigration: Appeal to Romanies not to seek asylum abroad (Nov 1997) 41931–2
Environment: Hydroelectric project dispute with Hungary (Mar 1997) 41553; (Sep 1997) 41831
Foreign relations:
Czech Republic
Disagreements (Apr 1997) 41607
Summit (Oct 1997) 41872–3
European Union (EU) membership question (Jul 1997) 41750; (Oct 1997) 41873; (Dec 1997) 41968
Hungary
Hydroelectric project dispute (Mar 1997) 41553; (Sep 1997) 41831

SLOVAKIA (contd)
Repatriation proposals for ethnic Hungarians dispute (Sep 1997) 41831
Summit (Aug 1997) 41791
Russia (Apr 1997) 41607
UK (Nov 1997) 41931–2
Foreign trade: Russia (Apr 1997) 41607
Media: (Jun 1997) 41706; (Oct 1997) 41873
Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS):
Exiled deputy not to be reinstated (Oct 1997) 41873
NATO referendum proposal (Feb 1997) 41504; (May 1997) 41656
Proposal on direct presidential elections (Jun 1997) 41706
NATO membership ambitions: (Feb 1997) 41504; (Apr 1997) 41607; (May 1997) 41656; (Jun 1997) 41706; (Jul 1997) 41750
New Agrarian Party (NAS): (Nov 1997) 41931
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL): NATO referendum proposal (Feb 1997) 41504
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41706
President:
Central European summit (Jun 1997) 41711
Joint statement with Prime Minister on EU membership (Oct 1997) 41873
Meeting with Russian Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41607
Prime Minister:
Insulted by Czech President (Apr 1997) 41607
Meeting with Czech Prime Minister (Oct 1997) 41762–3
Plea to Romanies not to seek asylum abroad (Nov 1997) 41931–2
Visit to Hungary (Aug 1997) 41791
Referendum crisis: (Apr 1997) 41607; (May 1997) 41656; (Jun 1997) 41706; (Jul 1997) 41750
Resignations: Ministerial (May 1997) 41656
Round-table talks between parties collapse: (Jul 1997) 41750
Security: Demonstrations (Jun 1997) 41706

SLOVENIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41554; (Sep 1997) 41834
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41554; (Jul 1997) 41750; (Sep 1997) 41834
Constitution: (Jul 1997) 41750
Defence: NATO membership hope (May 1997) 41655
Elections:
Timetable (Sep 1997) 41834
National Council (Nov 1997) 41932
Presidential (Nov 1997) 41932; (Dec 1997) 41979
Foreign relations:
European Union (EU) (May 1997) 41655; (Jul 1997) 41750; (Dec 1997) 41968
Hungary (May 1997) 41655
Italy (May 1997) 41655
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS): (Jan 1997) 41456; (Nov 1997) 41932
Political parties: (Jan 1997) 41456; (Mar 1997) 41554; (Nov 1997) 41932
President: Kucan's election success (Nov 1997) 41932; (Dec 1997) 41979
Prime Minister:
Meetings with, Hungarian and Italian Prime Ministers (May 1997) 41655
Re-election of Drnovsek (Jan 1997) 41456
Property ownership by foreigners question: (Jul 1997) 41750
Resignations: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41750
Slovene Spring alliance: (Jan 1997) 41456
UN: Temporary seat on Security Council (Oct 1997) 41874

SOLOMON ISLANDS
see also PACIFIC REGIONS
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41502; (Aug 1997) 41779
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41502; (Aug 1997) 41779
Economy: Structural reform programme (Oct 1997) 41871
Elections:

SOLOMON ISLANDS (contd)
Timetable (May 1997) 41645
Results (Aug 1997) 41779
Foreign relations: Papua New Guinea (Jul 1997) 41741
Resignations: Opposition leader (May 1997) 41645
Solomon Islands United Party: (May 1997) 41645

SOMALIA
Aydid: *see* Civil war
Civil war:
Aydid rejection of National Salvation Council meeting (Jan 1997) 41432
Aydid supporters fighting reported (May 1997) 41627
Cairo peace accord signed (Dec 1997) 41949
Factional killings and anarchy (Nov 1997) 41900
Factions' support for National Salvation Council (Jan 1997) 41432
Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (Dec 1997) 41950
Peace talks (May 1997) 41627; (Nov 1997) 41900
Rebellion of militiamen against Aydid (Apr 1997) 41579
Withdrawal of aid agencies (Nov 1997) 41900
Drought and famine: (Mar 1997) 41537
Floods: (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949
Foreign relations:
Ethiopia (Jan 1997) 41432
European Union (EU) (Nov 1997) 41900
Kenya (May 1997) 41627
Health: Haemorrhagic fever outbreaks (Dec 1997) 41949
National Salvation Council: (Jan 1997) 41432; (Dec 1997) 41949
Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA):
Peace moves (May 1997) 41627
Support for National Salvation Council (Jan 1997) 41432
Somaliland:
President
Re-election of Egal (Feb 1997) 41483
Resignation offer refused by legislature (Dec 1997) 41949
Ultimatum to UN Secretary-General (Mar 1997) 41527
UN:
Flood relief (Dec 1997) 41949
Peacekeeping forces
Belgian paratroopers trial (Jun 1997) 41696
Italian paratroopers to face torture investigations (Jun 1997) 41697
World Food Programme (WFP) (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949
United Somali Congress (USC): (May 1997) 41627; (Nov 1997) 41900
United Somali Congress-Somali National Alliance (USC-SNA):
Agreement with USC on structure of future government (Nov 1997) 41900
Peace talks (May 1997) 41627
Support for National Salvation Council (Jan 1997) 41432

SOUTH AFRICA
African National Congress (ANC):
Deputy Presidency nominations (Sep 1997) 41802
Elections to party posts (Dec 1997) 41947
Employment bill (Apr 1997) 41575; (Oct 1997) 41850
Inkatha's suspension of talks (Aug 1997) 41758
Kwazulu-Natal amnesty proposals (Jan 1997) 41430
National conference (Dec 1997) 41947–8
Proposals for new party to challenge ANC (Jul 1997) 41722
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (May 1997) 41623; (Dec 1997) 41947
Winnie Mandela re-elected as president of Women's League (Apr 1997) 41575
Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB):
Arrests (Jan 1997) 41430

SOUTH AFRICA (contd)
Terreblanche sentenced (Jun 1997) 41670
Appointments: Inkatha leadership (Jul 1997) 41722
Arms trade:
Syria arms sales question (Jan 1997) 41430
US threats (Jan 1997) 41430
Biko killers: (Jan 1997) 41430; (Feb 1997) 41479
Corruption: Civil service (Feb 1997) 41479
De Klerk:
Ignorance of atrocities asserted (May 1997) 41623; (Jun 1997) 41670
Retirement from politics (Aug 1997) 41758
Economy:
Budget (Mar 1997) 41527
Census figures (Jul 1997) 41722
Debt (Mar 1997) 41527
Draft employment bill (Apr 1997) 41574–5
Low growth (Feb 1997) 41479
Mining agreement (Jul 1997) 41722
Privatisation (Feb 1997) 41479; (Mar 1997) 41527
Trade unions (Mar 1997) 41527; (Apr 1997) 41574–5; (Jul 1997) 41722; (Oct 1997) 41850
Foreign relations:
Angola (Apr 1997) 41576
China (Dec 1997) 41948
Cuba (Jan 1997) 41430
Indonesia (Aug 1997) 41758; 41778
Lesotho (Jun 1997) 41670
Libya (Jan 1997) 41430; (Jun 1997) 41713; (Oct 1997) 41891
Papua New Guinea (Feb 1997) 41502
Portugal (Aug 1997) 41758
Sudan (Feb 1997) 41482; (Aug 1997) 41761
Swaziland (Feb 1997) 41479
Taiwan (Jun 1997) 41690; (Dec 1997) 41948
USA (Jan 1997) 41430
Zaïre (Feb 1997) 41477; (Apr 1997) 41573
Foreign trade: Cuba (Apr 1997) 41585
Freedom Front (FF): Talks with NP (Jun 1997) 41670
Inkatha Freedom Party:
see also Kwazulu-Natal; Trials
Amnesty questions (Jan 1997) 41430
Buthelezi
Tensions with Inkatha President (Jan 1997) 41430
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Aug 1997) 41758
Convictions for murder of ANC supporters (Mar 1997) 41528
Inquest on Shell House killings of Inkatha demonstrators (Dec 1997) 41948
Johannesburg rally violence (Mar 1997) 41527–8
Leadership changes (Jul 1997) 41722
Resignations of senior officials (Jan 1997) 41430
Suspension of talks with ANC (Aug 1997) 41758
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Aug 1997) 41758
Kwazulu-Natal:
ANC amnesty proposals (Jan 1997) 41430
Peace process, Difficulties (Jan 1997) 41430
Mandela, Winnie:
ANC Deputy Presidency nomination (Sep 1997) 41802
ANC NEC member (Dec 1997) 41947
Re-election as president of ANC Women's League (Apr 1997) 41575
Stompie Moeketsi Seipei killing (Nov 1997) 41898
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Sep 1997) 41802; (Nov 1997) 41898; (Dec 1997) 41947–8
National Party (NP):
see also De Klerk
Divisions within (May 1997) 41623
Reaction to proposals for new political party (Jul 1997) 41722
Retirement of De Klerk (Aug 1997) 41758
Talks with Freedom Front (Jun 1997) 41670
Truth Commission
Hearings (Oct 1997) 41850
Refusal to co-operate with (May 1997) 41623; (Jun 1997) 41670

SOUTH AFRICA (contd)
Van Schalkwyk elected as leader (Sep 1997) 41802
New Movement Process: (May 1997) 41623; (Jul 1997) 41722
Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC): Makwetu expulsion (Apr 1997) 41575; (May 1997) 41623
President:
Leaked letter to President Suharto of Indonesia (Aug 1997) 41758
Meetings with
Sudanese President (Aug 1997) 41761
Zaïre rebel leader Kabila (Feb 1997) 41477; (Apr 1997) 41573
Opening of Parliament (Feb 1997) 41479
Refusal to sever ties with Cuba and Libya (Jan 1997) 41430
Retirement from presidency of ANC (Dec 1997) 41947
Visits to
Angola (Apr 1997) 41576
Indonesia (Aug 1997) 41758; 41778
Libya (Oct 1997) 41891
Racial issues: Coloured people's grievances (Feb 1997) 41479
Resignations:
De Klerk from leadership of NP (Aug 1997) 41758
Inkatha senior officials (Jan 1997) 41430
Security:
Arrests over Rustenburg bombings (Jan 1997) 41430
Boer Attack Troops (BAT) (Jan 1997) 41430
Conflict between Police Commissioner and Security Minister (Apr 1997) 41575
Crime statistics (Apr 1997) 41575
Government crackdown on crime (Feb 1997) 41479
Inkatha Johannesburg rally (Mar 1997) 41527–8
Police (Apr 1997) 41575
Rent riots (Feb 1997) 41479
Township riots (Aug 1997) 41758
South African Communisty Party (SACP):
Employment bill (Apr 1997) 41575; (Oct 1997) 41850
Trials:
Inkatha supporters on murder charge (Mar 1997) 41528
Shell House killings of Inkatha demonstrators inquest (Dec 1997) 41948
Terreblanche (Jun 1997) 41670
Truth and Reconciliation Commission:
Amnesty question (Jan 1997) 41430
ANC national executive members (May 1997) 41623
Biko killers (Jan 1997) 41430; (Feb 1997) 41479; (Sep 1997) 41802
Botha, Pik (Oct 1997) 41850
Botha, P.W. (Sep 1997) 41802
Business submissions (Nov 1997) 41898–9
Closing of applications (May 1997) 41623
De Klerk submission (May 1997) 41623; (Jun 1997) 41670
De Kock (May 1997) 41623
Hani's killers' applications for amnesty (Aug 1997) 41758
Inkatha (Aug 1997) 41758
Mandela, Winnie (Sep 1997) 41802; (Nov 1997) 41898; (Dec 1997) 41947–8
National Party (NP) former ministers (Oct 1997) 41850
Refusal to submit to NP demands (Jun 1997) 41670
Vlok (Feb 1997) 41479; (Oct 1997) 41840
United Democratic Front (UDF): (Nov 1997) 41898
United Democratic Movement (UDM): (Sep 1997) 41802

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (SAARC)
Ministers' meeting: (Dec 1997) 41965
Summit: (May 1997) 41637

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION *see* PACIFIC REGIONS

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM (SPF) *see* PACIFIC REGIONS

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)
Membership: (Sep 1997) 41805
Summit: (Sep 1997) 41805

SPACE RESEARCH
Germany: (Feb 1997) 41522
Russia:
Joint German mission (Feb 1997) 41522
Mir (Apr 1997) 41618; (May 1997) 41666; (Jun 1997) 41718; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41845; (Oct 1997) 41893
USA:
Abandonment of shuttle mission (Apr 1997) 41618
Delta-2 rocket failure (Jan 1997) 41475
Hubble (Feb 1997) 41522
Joint Mir mission (Apr 1997) 41618; (May 1997) 41666; (Jun 1997) 41718; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41845
Pathfinder mission to Mars (Jul 1997) 41757
Saturn probe (Oct 1997) 41893
Shuttle flights (Feb 1997) 41522; (May 1997) 41666; (Sep 1997) 41845

SPAIN
Anti-terrorist Liberation Group (GAL):
Cesid documents released (Mar 1997) 41561
Gonzalez charges possibility (Mar 1997) 41561
Appointments: Attorney General (May 1997) 41649
Basque region:
Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) (Jul 1997) 41742; (Sep 1997) 41827
Death of HB member charged with inciting violence (Feb 1997) 41513
Dialogue with ETA urged by moderate Basque parties (Feb 1997) 41513
"Dirty war" documents released (Mar 1997) 41561
ETA (Euzkadi ta Askatasuna)
Arrests of ETA members in France (Jan 1997) 41463
Attempted attack on Guggenheim museum (Oct 1997) 41883
Extortion letters sent to businessmen (Sep 1997) 41827–8
Government campaign against (Aug 1997) 41783
Hostages freed (Jul 1997) 41742
Killings
Basque local councillor (Dec 1997) 41970–1
Blanco (local councillor) (Jul 1997) 41741–2; (Aug 1997) 41783
ETA suspects (Sep 1997) 41828
Police officer (Sep 1997) 41827
Prison psychologist (Mar 1997) 41561
Suspension of action "on prison front" (Nov 1997) 41926
Violence (Jan 1997) 41463; (Feb 1997) 41513; (Apr 1997) 41602
Herri Batasuna (HB) (Jan 1997) 41463; (Feb 1997) 41513; (Apr 1997) 41602; (Jul 1997) 41742; (Aug 1997) 41783; (Oct 1997) 41883; (Dec 1997) 41970–1
Ceuta (North African enclave): Security zone plan to keep out illegal immigrants (Sep 1997) 41828
Corruption:
see also Trials
Conde (Mar 1997) 41561–2
PSOE (Oct 1997) 41884
Defence: Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Dismissals: Attorney General (May 1997) 41649
Economy:
Bank of Spain (Jan 1997) 41463; (Apr 1997) 41602; (Oct 1997) 41884
Budget (Sep 1997) 41827
Civil war debt decree (Dec 1997) 41971
Economic indicators (May 1997) 41649–70
Interest rates (Jan 1997) 41463; (Apr 1997) 41602; (Oct 1997) 41884; (Dec 1997) 41971
Labour guidelines agreement (Apr 1997) 41602

SPAIN (contd)
Stability plan (Apr 1997) 41602
Trade unions (Mar 1997) 41562; (Apr 1997) 41602
Elections: Galicia (Oct 1997) 41884
European Union (EU):
Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Monetary union (Apr 1997) 41602; (May 1997) 41639
Rice quotas set by EU (Jan 1997) 41469
Tobacco advertising ban (Dec 1997) 41968
Fire in Valencia shipyard: (Jul 1997) 41742
Floods: (Nov 1997) 41926
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41558
Algeria (Apr 1997) 41616
Argentina (Mar 1997) 41532; (Oct 1997) 41858
Chile (Oct 1997) 41858
Cuba (Mar 1997) 41536
Dominican Republic (Aug 1997) 41783
Equatorial Guinea (Sep 1997) 41803
France (Jan 1997) 41463; (May 1997) 41649
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Mexico (May 1997) 41631
Taiwan (Oct 1997) 41861
UK *see* GIBRALTAR
USA (Oct 1997) 41858
Yemen (Dec 1997) 41980
Galicia: Elections (Oct 1997) 41884
Immigration: Security systems for North African enclaves (Sep 1997) 41828
Melilla: Security system (Sep 1997) 41828
Popular Party (PP):
Aznar's budget (Sep 1997) 41827
Galicia (Oct 1997) 41884
Killing of Basque councillor (Jul 1997) 41741–2
Rejection of Basque initiative for dialogue with ETA (Feb 1997) 41513
Withdrawal of Basque Nationalist Party from coalition (Sep 1997) 41827
Rail crash: (Mar 1997) 41562
Resignations: PSOE leader (Jun 1997) 41698
Security:
see also Anti-terrorist Liberation Group (GAL); Basque region: ETA (Euzkadi ta Askatasuna)
Cesid
"Dirty war" documents released (Mar 1997) 41561
Trial of Pellón (Jun 1997) 41698; (Jul 1997) 41742
Demonstrations and violence over killing of Basque councillor (Jul 1997) 41741–2; (Aug 1997) 41783
Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE):
Basque region (Aug 1997) 41783
Corruption (Oct 1997) 41884
"Dirty war" allegations (Jun 1997) 41698; (Oct 1997) 41883–4
Election of new leader (Jun 1997) 41698
Supreme Court rulings:
"Dirty war" trial (Oct 1997) 41883–4
Toxic oil case (Oct 1997) 41884
Trade unions: *see* Economy
Trials:
Herri Batasuna (HB) leadership (Oct 1997) 41883; (Dec 1997) 41970–1
Pellón (Jun 1997) 41698; (Jul 1997) 41742
PSOE members and businessmen corruption trials (Filesa affair) (Oct 1997) 41884
Roldán (Jun 1997) 41698

SPRATLY ISLANDS, Philippines-China dispute: (May 1997) 41643; (Jun 1997) 41686

SRI LANKA
Appointments: Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41692
Armed forces: *see* Tamil Tigers (LTTE)
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41692
Constitution: (Mar 1997) 41544; (Jul 1997) 41740–1; (Aug 1997) 41775
Devolution campaign for north-east (Tamil) region: (Aug 1997) 41775
Elections: Local (Mar 1997) 41544
Foreign relations:
India (Nov 1997) 41914
UK (Apr 1997) 41588

SRI LANKA (contd)
USA (Oct 1997) 41865
Human rights: (Sep 1997) 41820–1
People's Alliance:
Local elections (Mar 1997) 41544
MP killed (Feb 1997) 41500
President: Policy towards Tamil Tigers agreed with UNP (Apr 1997) 41588
Security:
Arrest of former UNP minister (Jun 1997) 41692
Colombo bombing (Oct 1997) 41865
Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP) activists under investigation for torture (Sep 1997) 41821
Killings
MPs (Feb 1997) 41500; (Jul 1997) 41740
Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) member (Jul 1997) 41740
State of emergency lifted in much of country (Jul 1997) 41740
Tamil Tigers (LTTE):
Attack on Paranthan army garrison (Jan 1997) 41449
Denial of responsibility for Colombo bombing (Oct 1997) 41865
Government offensive (May 1997) 41637; (Jun 1997) 41692; (Jul 1997) 41740; (Aug 1997) 41775; (Nov 1997) 41914; (Dec 1997) 41965
Government-UNP bipartisan policy towards agreed (Apr 1997) 41588
Government's devolution proposals (Aug 1997) 41775; (Oct 1997) 41865; (Nov 1997) 41914–15
Links with assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (Nov 1997) 41914
Rejection of draft constitution offering wider autonomy for Tamils (Mar 1997) 41544
United National Party (UNP):
Agreement with President over policy towards Tamil Tigers (Apr 1997) 41588
Arrest of former minister (Jun 1997) 41692
Killing of People's Alliance MP (Feb 1997) 41500
Mohammed Moharoof assassinated (Jul 1997) 41740
Officials responsible for 1988–90 reign of terror to be tried (Sep 1997) 41820–1

ST HELENA
Resignations: Governing executive members (Apr 1997) 41586
Security: Popular unrest (Apr 1997) 41586

ST KITTS AND NEVIS
Corruption: (Dec 1997) 41957
Drugs: (Oct 1997) 41859
Nevis: Secession question (Feb 1997) 41490; (Oct 1997) 41859
People's Action Movement (PAM): (Dec 1997) 41957

ST LUCIA
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41634
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41634
Elections: General (May 1997) 41634
Foreign relations:
China (Aug 1997) 41770
Taiwan (Aug 1997) 41770
Governor-General: (Sep 1997) 41813
Political parties: (May 1997) 41634; (Sep 1997) 41813

ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES, Obituary of Cato (first Prime Minister): (Mar 1997) 41537

STORMS, CYCLONES AND FLOODS
Afghanistan: Avalanche deaths (Mar 1997) 41543
Bangladesh: (May 1997) 41637; (Sep 1997) 41821
Belarus: (Jun 1997) 41710
Brazil: (Jan 1997) 41439; (Oct 1997) 41857
China: (Jan 1997) 41446
Czech Republic: (Jul 1997) 41750; (Aug 1997) 41791–2; (Sep 1997) 41831
India: (Aug 1997) 41775
Japan: (Jul 1997) 41736
Mexico: (Oct 1997) 41856

STORMS, CYCLONES AND FLOODS (contd)
Poland: (Jul 1997) 41750; (Aug 1997) 41792
Romania: (Aug 1997) 41791
Somalia: (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949
Spain and Portugal: (Nov 1997) 41926
Uganda: (Nov 1997) 41900
Ukraine: (Jun 1997) 41710
USA: Texas (May 1997) 41630
Vietnam: (Nov 1997) 41917

SUDAN
Appointments:
Military (Oct 1997) 41852
South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) chair (Aug 1997) 41761
Defence:
Armed forces
see also Southern civil war
Leadership (Oct 1997) 41852
Mobilisation in Kassala region bordering Eritrea (Jun 1997) 41673
Elections: Southern states gubernatorial (Dec 1997) 41949
Foreign relations:
Egypt (Jun 1997) 41673
Eritrea (Jan 1997) 41433; (Apr 1997) 41578; (May 1997) 41627; (Jun 1997) 41673–4; (Jul 1997) 41720
Ethiopia (Jan 1997) 41433
Iran (Mar 1997) 41527
Israel (Jun 1997) 41673–4; (Oct 1997) 41890
Kenya (May 1997) 41627
South Africa (Feb 1997) 41482; (Aug 1997) 41761
Uganda (Jan 1997) 41433; (Mar 1997) 41527; (Apr 1997) 41578; (May 1997) 41628
United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Feb 1997) 41482
USA (Sep 1997) 41804; (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949
Human rights: (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949
National Democratic Alliance (NDA):
Alliance with SPLA (Jan 1997) 41433
Clashes with government forces (Mar 1997) 41526; (May 1997) 41627; (Aug 1997) 41761
Egyptian support for (Jun 1997) 41673
Meeting with US Secretary of State (Dec 1997) 41949
Success claims (Apr 1997) 41578
United Arab Emirates mediation offered (Feb 1997) 41482
National Islamic Front (NIF): Disclosure of arrest of opposition politicians (Feb 1997) 41482
Refugees:
From southern civil war (Jan 1997) 41433
Repatriation (Mar 1997) 41526
Security:
see also Southern civil war
Arrest of opposition politicians (Feb 1997) 41482
Southern civil war:
see also National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
Gubernatorial elections (Dec 1997) 41949
Intensification (Jan 1997) 41432–3; (Mar 1997) 41526; (Apr 1997) 41578
Peace negotiations
Adjournment of talks (Nov 1997) 41900
Agreement signed between government and southern splinter groups (Apr 1997) 41578; (May 1997) 41627; (Jul 1997) 41720
Ceasefire (Sep 1997) 41804
Framework for talks agreed (Jul 1997) 41720; (Sep 1997) 41804
Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) (May 1997) 41627; (Jul 1997) 41720; (Aug 1997) 41761; (Sep 1997) 41804; (Oct 1997) 41852; (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41950
Nairobi peace talks (Oct 1997) 41852; (Nov 1997) 41900
Refugees from (Jan 1997) 41433
South Africa mediation efforts (Feb 1997) 41482; (Aug 1997) 41761
South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) (Aug 1997) 41761
Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)
Alliance with Eritrean based National

SUDAN (contd)
Democratic Alliance (NDA) (Jan 1997) 41433
Fighting (May 1997) 41627; (Aug 1997) 41761
Gains (Jan 1997) 41433; (Apr 1997) 41578; (Jun 1997) 41674; (Jul 1997) 41720; (Oct 1997) 41852
Garang meetings with
South African President (Feb 1997) 41482; (Sep 1997) 41804
US Secretary of State (Dec 1997) 41949
Offensive in north-east (Mar 1997) 41526
Peace talks (Oct 1997) 41852; (Nov 1997) 41900
Response to peace framework agreement (Jul 1997) 41720
Ugandan support for (Mar 1997) 41527; (Apr 1997) 41578
US Secretary of State (Dec 1997) 41949
UN: Refugees report (Jan 1997) 41433

SURINAM
Drugs: Anti-drug measures (Mar 1997) 41534
Economy:
Central bank (Mar 1997) 41534
Collapse of "pyramid" investment schemes warning (Mar 1997) 41534
Government spending dispute (Aug 1997) 41769
Foreign relations: Netherlands (Mar 1997) 41534
National Democratic Party (NDP): Negotiations over governing coalition (Aug 1997) 41769

SWAZILAND
Constitution: (Feb 1997) 41479
Foreign relations: South Africa (Feb 1997) 41479
Security: Pro-democracy protests (Feb 1997) 41479

SWEDEN
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41468
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41468
Economy:
Budget (Apr 1997) 41599; (Sep 1997) 41830
Tax cut plans abandoned (Sep 1997) 41830
Eugenics programme (enforced sterilisations) inquiry: (Aug 1997) 41784
European Union (EU):
ECJ ruling on liquor monopoly (Mar 1997) 41563
Multi-speed Europe (Jan 1997) 41468
Single currency position (Oct 1997) 41882
Foreign relations: Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Left Party: Leader's leave of absence (Sep 1997) 41830
Nuclear energy: Closure of two reactors (Feb 1997) 41515
Obituary of Bohman (former Moderate Party leader): (Aug 1997) 41784
People's Party: (Mar 1997) 41563
Security: Stadium bombings (Aug 1997) 41784
Social Democratic Party (SAP): (Jan 1997) 41468; (Apr 1997) 41599; (Sep 1997) 41830
Trials: Application for new trial of Palme murder suspect (Dec 1997) 41970
War crimes: Nazi gold allegations (Jan 1997) 41468

SWITZERLAND
Arms trade: (Jun 1997) 41701
Defence: NATO partnerships for peace programme (Apr 1997) 41617
Drugs: Anti-drug programme (Sep 1997) 41831
Economy:
Banks
Merger (Dec 1997) 41976
Name change for Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) (Mar 1997) 41554
War-time gold controversy (Jan 1997) 41461; (Jun 1997) 41718
Espionage: Arrest of Swiss diplomat (Jul 1997) 41754
Foreign relations:
Chile (Sep 1997) 41811
European Union (EU) (Jun 1997) 41701
Mali (Apr 1997) 41578; (Sep 1997) 41804
Pakistan (Sep 1997) 41819
Philippines (Dec 1997) 41962

SWITZERLAND (contd)
Romania (Jul 1997) 41754
USA (May 1997) 41666
Health: BSE beef crisis (Jan 1997) 41469
Mobutu (former President of Zaire) appeal over freezing of assets rejected: (Aug 1997) 41759
President: Cotti elected (Dec 1997) 41976
Referendums:
Anti-drug programme (Sep 1997) 41831
Arms exports (Jun 1997) 41701
Unemployment benefit (Sep 1997) 41831
Socialist Party: (Jun 1997) 41701
Solidarity Foundation plans: (Mar 1997) 41554
War crimes:
Banks' role (Jan 1997) 41461; (Jun 1997) 41718
Committee to investigate country's role (Feb 1997) 41512; (Mar 1997) 41554
Compensation fund for Holocaust victims (Jan 1997) 41461; (Feb 1997) 41511–12; (Mar 1997) 41554; (Apr 1997) 41612; (Nov 1997) 41941
Discovery of more Nazi-era funds (Jun 1997) 41718
Dormant accounts list (Jul 1997) 41757; (Oct 1997) 41893; (Nov 1997) 41941; (Dec 1997) 41984
Trustees appointed for dormant Swiss bank accounts (Sep 1997) 41845
US report on Nazi gold (May 1997) 41666

SYRIA
see also MIDDLE EAST
Drugs: Removed from US narcotics list (Nov 1997) 41937–8
Economy: Budget (May 1997) 41664
Foreign relations:
Egypt, Middle East peace process (May 1997) 41662
Iran (Jun 1997) 41715; (Jul 1997) 41756; (Aug 1997) 41793
Iraq (Jun 1997) 41715; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Nov 1997) 41938
Israel
see also MIDDLE EAST
Damascus bombing blamed on Mossad (Jan 1997) 41471
Turkey (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41703
USA (Sep 1997) 41839–40; (Nov 1997) 41737–8
Foreign trade: Iraq (Aug 1997) 41793
President:
Health (Jan 1997) 41471; (Feb 1997) 41519
Visits to
Egypt (May 1997) 41662
Iran (Aug 1997) 41793
Religious affairs: Muslim Brotherhood (Apr 1997) 41616
Security:
Attacks on Syrian targets in Lebanon blamed on Israelis (Jan 1997) 41471
Bombings, Damascus (Jan 1997) 41471
Islamic Movement for Change (IMC) (Jan 1997) 41471
Release of imprisoned Muslim Brotherhood members planned (Apr 1997) 41616

T

TAIWAN
Appointments:

KMT secretary general (Dec 1997) 41960
Ministerial (May 1997) 41639; (Aug 1997) 41770
Vice Premier (Dec 1997) 41960
Aviation: Hijacking of aircraft to China (Mar 1997) 41541; (May 1997) 41639
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41639; (Aug 1997) 41770
Chinese New Party: (Jan 1997) 41446
Constitution:
Government reform plan (Jan 1997) 41446
Talks (Jun 1997) 41690
Approval of reform package by National Assembly (Jul 1997) 41738
Democratic Progressive Party (DPP):
Constitutional reform question (Jan 1997) 41446
Local elections (Mar 1997) 41541; (Nov 1997) 41911

KMT secretary general (Dec 1997) 41960 (contd)
Economy:
Agriculture, Pig disease epidemic (May 1997) 41639
Budget (Mar 1997) 41541
Central bank (Oct 1997) 41861–2
Regional currency crisis (Oct 1997) 41861–2
Elections: Local (Mar 1997) 41541; (Nov 1997) 41911
Foreign relations:
Austria (Oct 1997) 41861
Bahamas (May 1997) 41639
Belize (Jul 1997) 41738
Caribbean (Jul 1997) 41738
Chad (Aug 1997) 41770
China
Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan (Mar 1997) 41541
Demonstrations against China's Hong Kong policy (Jun 1997) 41690
Hijacking incident (Mar 1997) 41541; (May 1997) 41639
Islands dispute (May 1997) 41640
Repatriation of mainland hijackers (Jul 1997) 41738
Reunification emphasised at Hong Kong handover (Jul 1997) 41732
Sea links restoration accord (Jan 1997) 41446; (Apr 1997) 41589–90
Taiwanese military exercise (Jun 1997) 41690
Visit by Chinese official (Aug 1997) 41770
WHO application rejected by China (May 1997) 41639
Costa Rica (Jul 1997) 41738
El Salvador (Jul 1997) 41738; (Sep 1997) 41814
Guatemala (Jul 1997) 41738
Honduras (Jul 1997) 41738; (Sep 1997) 41814
Hong Kong, Removal of Taiwanese flags (Oct 1997) 41861
Iceland (Oct 1997) 41861
Japan, Islands dispute (May 1997) 41640
Korea, North, Nuclear waste deal (Mar 1997) 41541
Liberia (Sep 1997) 41814–15
Malaysia (Nov 1997) 41911
Nicaragua (Jul 1997) 41738; (Sep 1997) 41814
Panama (Sep 1997) 41810; 41814
Papua New Guinea (Sep 1997) 41825
Paraguay (Sep 1997) 41814
St Lucia (Aug 1997) 41770
São Tomé and Príncipe (May 1997) 41639
Singapore (Nov 1997) 41911
South Africa (Jun 1997) 41690; (Dec 1997) 41948
Spain (Oct 1997) 41861
Foreign trade:
Australia (Feb 1997) 41494
China
Banking joint venture (Jan 1997) 41446
Investment in China regulations and ban (May 1997) 41639–40; (Jun 1997) 41690
Hong Kong (Jan 1997) 41446
Japan (Feb 1997) 41494
Korea, South (Feb 1997) 41494
World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership talks (Feb 1997) 41494
Kuomintang (KMT):
Congress (Aug 1997) 41769–70
Local elections (Mar 1997) 41541; (Nov 1997) 41911
Reform plans (Jan 1997) 41446
Resignation of Soong as Provincial Governor (Jan 1997) 41446
Secretary general (Dec 1997) 41960
Maps: (Apr 1997) 41590; (May 1997) 41640
Nuclear issues: Nuclear waste deal with North Korea (Mar 1997) 41541
Political crisis over deterioration in law and order: (May 1997) 41639
President:
Address to KMT congress (Aug 1997) 41770
Amnesty for "2–28" (1947 revolt against KMT forces) victims approved (Jun 1997) 41690
Consultations over new Prime Minister (Jul 1997) 41738
Controversy over remarks on independence (Nov 1997) 41911

KMT secretary general (Dec 1997) 41960 (contd)
Prevented from delivering state-of-the-nation address (May 1997) 41639
Re-election of Lee as KMT chairman (Aug 1997) 41769–70
Visit to Central America (Sep 1997) 41814
Prime Minister:
Meetings with
Malaysia Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41911
Singapore Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41911
Resignation of Lien Chan announced (Jul 1997) 41738
Vincent Siew appointed (Aug 1997) 41770
Religious affairs: Dalai Lama's visit (Mar 1997) 41541
Resignations:
Ministerial (May 1997) 41639
Prime Minister Lien Chan (Jul 1997) 41738
Soong as Provincial Governor (Jan 1997) 41446
Security:
Anti-Triad law (Feb 1997) 41494
Curfew on teenagers (Feb 1997) 41494
Killing of teenage girl (May 1997) 41639
Reform discussions (May 1997) 41639
Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF): (Jul 1997) 41738; (Aug 1997) 41770
United Front for Taiwan's Independence: (Sep 1997) 41815

TAJIKISTAN
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Armed forces:
Integration talks (Mar 1997) 41542
Mutiny (Jun 1997) 41694; (Jul 1997) 41738–9; (Aug 1997) 41773; (Oct 1997) 41867–8
Reductions (Jul 1997) 41738
Aviation: Air crash in United Arab Emirates (Dec 1997) 41980
Civil war:
CIS peacekeeping force (Mar 1997) 41552; (May 1997) 41635
Peace negotiations
Amnesty law (Aug 1997) 41774
Talks (Jan 1997) 41452; (Mar 1997) 41542; (Apr 1997) 41588
Suspended (Apr 1997) 41588
Signing of agreement (May 1997) 41636; (Jun 1997) 41693–4
Tajik National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) (Jul 1997) 41738; (Aug 1997) 41774
Release of prisoners (Oct 1997) 41867
Returning refugees (Jan 1997) 41452; (Nov 1997) 41913
Constitution: (May 1997) 41636
Drugs: (Mar 1997) 41542
Economy:
Donor conference (Nov 1997) 41913
IMF loan (Dec 1997) 41966
World Bank credit (Nov 1997) 41913
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (Mar 1997) 41542; (May 1997) 41635; (Dec 1997) 41966
China (Apr 1997) 41589
Kyrgyzstan (Mar 1997) 41542
Russia (Jan 1997) 41452; (Mar 1997) 41542
National Reconciliation Commission (NRC): (May 1997) 41636; (Aug 1997) 41774; (Sep 1997) 41818
President:
Injured in grenade attack (Apr 1997) 41588; (May 1997) 41636
UN-sponsored donor conference (Nov 1997) 41913
Security:
see also Armed forces: Mutiny; Civil war
Arrest of Dustboboyev (Apr 1997) 41588
Attack on presidential guard (Oct 1997) 41866–7
Dushanbe bombings (Jul 1997) 41739; (Sep 1997) 41818
Grenade attack on President (Apr 1997) 41588; (May 1997) 41636
Hostage crisis (Feb 1997) 41500; (Mar 1997) 41542; (Sep 1997) 41818; (Dec 1997) 41966
Kidnapping of mufti (Sep 1997) 41818
Killing of members of armed group allegedly

TAJIKISTAN (contd)
responsible for attack on President (May 1997) 41636
Return of UTO opposition leader from exile (Sep 1997) 41818
Sadirov
Captured (Mar 1997) 41542
Killed (Dec 1997) 41977
UN:
Donor conference (Nov 1997) 41913
Hostages (Feb 1997) 41500; (Mar 1997) 41542; (Sep 1997) 41818; (Dec 1997) 41966
Observer mission mandate extended (Mar 1997) 41542; (Jun 1997) 41694; (Sep 1997) 41818; (Nov 1997) 41913
Peace accord (Jun 1997) 41693
United Tajiak Opposition (UTO): (Mar 1997) 41542; (Apr 1997) 41588; (May 1997) 41636; (Jun 1997) 41693–4; (Sep 1997) 41818; (Oct 1997) 41866–7; (Nov 1997) 41913

TANZANIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41478
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41478
Famine: (Sep 1997) 41806
Foreign relations: Burundi (Aug 1997) 41762; (Sep 1997) 41801; (Oct 1997) 41851; (Nov 1997) 41897
Refugees:
Allegations of ill-treatment of Burundi refugees (Nov 1997) 41897
Expulsion back to Burundi (Oct 1997) 41851
From Burundi (Jul 1997) 41721
Zanzibar: Civic United Front, Treason charges (Dec 1997) 41950

THAILAND
Appointments: Ministerial (Aug 1997) 41777; (Oct 1997) 41868; (Nov 1997) 41915–16
Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN): (Apr 1997) 41595
Cabinet: (Jun 1997) 41684–5; (Aug 1997) 41777; (Oct 1997) 41868; (Nov 1997) 41915–16
Constitutional reform: (Sep 1997) 41821
Defence: Weapons negotiations with China (Apr 1997) 41595
Dismissals: Central bank officials (Mar 1997) 41545
Economy:
Budget (Feb 1997) 41501; (May 1997) 41642; (Aug 1997) 41777
Cabinet conflict over policy (Jun 1997) 41684–5
Central bank (Mar 1997) 41545; (Jul 1997) 41734; (Nov 1997) 41916
Closure of bankrupt institutions (Dec 1997) 41962–3
Crisis in financial markets (Mar 1997) 41545; (May 1997) 41642; (Jul 1997) 41734–5; (Aug 1997) 41777; (Sep 1997) 41821; (Oct 1997) 41861; 41868
Currency devaluation (Jul 1997) 41734; (Oct 1997) 41861; 41868
Government pension fund (Mar 1997) 41545
IMF (Jul 1997) 41734; (Aug 1997) 41777; (Sep 1997) 41844; (Oct 1997) 41868; (Nov 1997) 41916; (Dec 1997) 41962–3
Land issues (Apr 1997) 41595
Licensing of new insurance companies (Mar 1997) 41545
Privatisation of telecommunications (Nov 1997) 41916
Reform package (Aug 1997) 41777; (Oct 1997) 41868; (Nov 1997) 41916; (Dec 1997) 41962–3
Fire deaths at Pattaya hotel: (Jul 1997) 41735
Foreign relations:
Burma (Feb 1997) 41501; (Mar 1997) 41544; (May 1997) 41642
China, Arms purchase negotiations (Apr 1997) 41595
Vietnam, Sea border treaty (Aug 1997) 41777
Forum of the Poor: (Apr 1997) 41595; (May 1997) 41642
Political parties: (Oct 1997) 41868; (Nov 1997) 41915–16
Prime Minister:

THAILAND (contd)
Criticised over economic crisis (Oct 1997) 41868
Resignation of Chaovalit and appointment of Chuan (Nov 1997) 41915–16
Visit to Burma (May 1997) 41642
Resignations:
Bank of Thailand governor (Jul 1997) 41734
Ministerial (Jun 1997) 41684–5; (Oct 1997) 41868
Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41915–16
Security:
Demonstrations (Apr 1997) 41595; (May 1997) 41642
Muslim separatists (Apr 1997) 41595

TIBET
Dalai Lama:
Imprisonment of Tibetan go-between (May 1997) 41638
Visit to Taiwan (Mar 1997) 41541
Economy: European Union (EU) aid frozen (Dec 1997) 41961
Foreign relations: European Union (EU) (Dec 1997) 41961
Human rights: Save the Children Fund worker expelled (Dec 1997) 41961
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) report: (Dec 1997) 41960–1
Trials: Chatral Rimpoche (May 1997) 41638

TOGO
Foreign relations:
Burkina Faso (Mar 1997) 41529
Western Sahara (Jun 1997) 41713
Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) membership: (Oct 1997) 41893

TONGA
Economy: Budget (Jul 1997) 41741
Impeachment efforts against Justice Minister: (May 1997) 41646; (Sep 1997) 41825
Legislative Assembly: (May 1997) 41646

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
Elections:
By-election victory for National Alliance for Reconstruction (May 1997) 41634
Presidential (Feb 1997) 41490
National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR): (May 1997) 41634
Obituary of Chambers (former Prime Minister): (Nov 1997) 41907
Political parties: (Feb 1997) 41490
President: Robinson elected (Feb 1997) 41490
United National Congress (UNC): (May 1997) 41634

TUAREGS, Niger: (Jun 1997) 41673; (Sep 1997) 41804; (Dec 1997) 41945

TUNISIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Jan 1997) 41473; (Oct 1997) 41891
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41473; (Oct 1997) 41891
Human rights: (Jan 1997) 41473; (Aug 1997) 41797
Mouvement des démocrates socialistes (MDS): (Jan 1997) 41473
Security:
Deaths in prison (May 1997) 41664; (Aug 1997) 41797
Release of opposition leader (Jan 1997) 41473

TURKEY
Appointments: Ministerial (Apr 1997) 41604; (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41702–3
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41702–3
Casinos to be closed: (Aug 1997) 41788
Ciller:
Corruption charges dropped (Feb 1997) 41511
EU membership plea (Apr 1997) 41604
Husband charged with altering documents (Oct 1997) 41877
Constitutional Court: Suit filed against Welfare Party (May 1997) 41652; (Nov 1997) 41930
Corruption:

TURKEY (contd)
Ciller charges dropped (Feb 1997) 41511
Ciller's husband charged (Oct 1997) 41877
State involvement with criminal gangs alleged (Jan 1997) 41462
Cyprus (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)): *see* CYPRUS
Defence:
Armed forces
Cyprus (Jan 1997) 41462
Expulsion of suspected Islamists (Aug 1997) 41788
Tensions with Erbakan government (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41702
Democracy Party (DEP) (pro-Kurdish): European Court of Human Rights compensation ruling (Nov 1997) 41930
Democratic Left Party (DSP):
Failure of motion censuring government (Feb 1997) 41511
Pressure towards early general election (Apr 1997) 41604
Democratic Turkey Party (DTP): (Jul 1997) 41746
Developing Eight (D-8) Group of Islamic countries agreement: (Apr 1997) 41617
Economy:
Budget (Dec 1997) 41973
Gas agreement with Russia (Dec 1997) 41973
IMF (Nov 1997) 41929–30; (Dec 1997) 41973
Inflation reduction plan (Nov 1997) 41929–30; (Dec 1997) 41973
Reform plans (Dec 1997) 41973
Education reform questions: (Apr 1997) 41603–4; (Jul 1997) 41746; (Aug 1997) 41788
European Union (EU) membership application: (Apr 1997) 41604; (Oct 1997) 41876; 41887; (Dec 1997) 41968; 41973
Foreign relations:
Albania (Mar 1997) 41558
Armenia (Jun 1997) 41703
Azerbaijan (May 1997) 41660
Bulgaria (Oct 1997) 41876; (Dec 1997) 41978
Greece
Agreement on peaceful resolution of disputes (Jul 1997) 41746
Crete summit (Nov 1997) 41934
Cyprus
Arms build-up (Jan 1997) 41461–2
TRNC "partial integration" agreement (Aug 1997) 41789
Turkish military exercises (Nov 1997) 41929
War games (Oct 1997) 41877
Denial of violation of Greek airspace on Christmas Day (Dec 1997) 41973
Expulsions of diplomats for spying (Dec 1997) 41973
Greek support for PKK Kurds alleged (Jun 1997) 41703
Wise men group to help resolve territorial disputes (Apr 1997) 41604
Iran, Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41703
Iraq, Criticism of Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652
Israel (Jun 1997) 41715; 41716; (Dec 1997) 41982
Italy, Kurdish refugees (Dec 1997) 41973
NATO, Reaction to Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652
Romania (Oct 1997) 41876
Serbia (Jun 1997) 41703
Syria (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41703
USA (Dec 1997) 41973
Foreign trade:
Iraq (May 1997) 41661–2
Kazakhstan (Oct 1997) 41867
Russia (Dec 1997) 41973
Grand National Assembly (GNA): Breakdown of seats (Jun 1997) 41702
Human rights: (Aug 1997) 41788; (Nov 1997) 41930
Kurds: *see* KURDS
Media: Press amnesty law (Aug 1997) 41788
Motherland Party (ANAP):
Coalition government (Jun 1997) 41602–3

TURKEY (contd)
Pressure towards early general election (Apr 1997) 41604
Nationalist Action Party (MHP): (Apr 1997) 41604
Obituary of Turkes: (Apr 1997) 41604
Political parties: (Jun 1997) 41702
President: Summit with Presidents of Bulgaria and Romania (Oct 1997) 41876
Prime Minister:
Defeat of opposition's censure motion (Feb 1997) 41511
Early general election likely (Apr 1997) 41604
Meeting with National Security Council (NSC) (Apr 1997) 41603–4
Resignation of Erbakan (Jun 1997) 41602
Visits to
Bulgaria (Dec 1997) 41978
USA (Dec 1997) 41973
Yilmaz (ANAP) government (Jun 1997) 41602–3; (Jul 1997) 41746
Religious affairs:
Islamist schools (Apr 1997) 41603–4
Islamist sect members imprisoned (Apr 1997) 41604
Security:
Anti-Kurdish offensives (May 1997) 41651–2; (Jun 1997) 41703; 41725; (Oct 1997) 41877
Islamic extremists (Feb 1997) 41511; (Mar 1997) 41558–9; (Aug 1997) 41788
National Security Council (NSC) (Feb 1997) 41511; (Mar 1997) 41558–9; (Apr 1997) 41603–4
Release of Yagmurdereli (Nov 1997) 41930
Trials: Islamist sect members imprisoned (Apr 1997) 41604
True Path Party (DYP):
Ciller's future in politics (Jul 1997) 41746
Defections (Jul 1997) 41746
Failure of coalition with Welfare Party (Jun 1997) 41602
Links with criminal gangs alleged (Jan 1997) 41462
Tensions with Welfare Party (May 1997) 41652; (Jun 1997) 41702
Welfare Party (RP):
Censure motion defeated (Feb 1997) 41511
Constitutional difficulties (May 1997) 41652; (Nov 1997) 41930
Education reform questions (Apr 1997) 41603–4; (Aug 1997) 41788
Resignation of Erbakan as Prime Minister (Jun 1997) 41602
Tensions with military (May 1997) 41652

TURKMENISTAN
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41739; (Dec 1997) 41966
Cabinet: (Dec 1997) 41966
Criminal code: (Jun 1997) 41694
Death penalty: (Jun 1997) 41694
Dismissals: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41739
Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO) summit: (May 1997) 41666
Economy:
Budget (Nov 1997) 41912
Energy (May 1997) 41666; (Oct 1997) 41866; (Dec 1997) 41966
Hydrocarbons law (Mar 1997) 41548
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (Oct 1997) 41866; (Dec 1997) 41966
Azerbaijan, Oil dispute (Jul 1997) 41739; (Oct 1997) 41866
Foreign trade:
Iran (Oct 1997) 41866; (Dec 1997) 41966
Israel (Mar 1997) 41566
Pakistan (May 1997) 41666; (Oct 1997) 41866
USA (Oct 1997) 41866

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS
Foreign trade: European Union (EU) (Jan 1997) 41469

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS (contd)
UK initiative to counter money laundering: (Jan 1997) 41443

TUVALU, Environment: Global warming fears (Sep 1997) 41825

U

UAE *see* UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

UGANDA
Defence: Armed forces, Attacks on Sudan (Mar 1997) 41527
Economy:
Debt relief programme (Apr 1997) 41578
IMF agreement (Nov 1997) 41900
Floods: (Nov 1997) 41900
Foreign relations:
Burundi (Sep 1997) 41801
Iran (Mar 1997) 41527
Sudan (Jan 1997) 41433; (Mar 1997) 41527; (Apr 1997) 41578; (May 1997) 41628
Zaïre (Jan 1997) 41431; (Feb 1997) 41477; (May 1997) 41621
Security:
Killing of bishop (May 1997) 41628
Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (Mar 1997) 41527; (May 1997) 41628
UKRAINE
see also COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments:
Central Bank governor (Feb 1997) 41508
Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41508; (Apr 1997) 41610; (May 1997) 41660; (Jul 1997) 41751–2; (Aug 1997) 41787
Prime Minister (Jul 1997) 41751
Prosecutor General (Jul 1997) 41752; (Dec 1997) 41975
State Property Fund (Mar 1997) 41551
Cabinet: (Feb 1997) 41508; (Apr 1997) 41610; (May 1997) 41660; (Jul 1997) 41751–2; (Aug 1997) 41787
Constitutional Court:
Formal opening (Jan 1997) 41459
Parliamentary auditing department constitutionality question (Jan 1997) 41459
Ruling on holding of government posts (May 1997) 41660
Corruption:
Anti-corruption measures (Apr 1997) 41610–11
Lazarenko (former Prime Minister) (Dec 1997) 41975
Zvyagilsky (former interim prime minister) (Feb 1997) 41508; (Mar 1997) 41551
Crimea:
Cabinet (Jun 1997) 41710
Constitution (Feb 1997) 41508; (Apr 1997) 41611
Demonstrations against NATO Sea Breeze exercises (Aug 1997) 41787
Prime Minister, Demydenko replaced by Franchuk (Jun 1997) 41710
Pro-Moscow legislation vetoed by President as unconstitutional (Oct 1997) 41878
Sevastopol issue (Jan 1997) 41459
Supreme Council
Hunger strike by deputies (Mar 1997) 41551
Speaker replaced (Feb 1997) 41508
Defence:
Naval manoeuvres with Russia (Oct 1997) 41878–9
Talks with Russia (Aug 1997) 41787
Ukraine-NATO security pact (May 1997) 41665–6; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Aug 1997) 41787
Disasters: Storm damage (Jun 1997) 41710
Dismissals: Prosecutor General (Jul 1997) 41752
Economy:
Agriculture Ministry restructured (Jun 1997) 41710
Austerity programme (Aug 1997) 41787
Budget (Mar 1997) 41551; (Jun 1997) 41709–10; (Sep 1997) 41837–8; (Dec 1997) 41975
Car manufacture (Sep 1997) 41838

UGANDA (contd)
Central bank (Feb 1997) 41508; (Nov 1997) 41923
Currency (Apr 1997) 41611; (Aug 1997) 41787; (Nov 1997) 41923
IMF (Mar 1997) 41551; (Jun 1997) 41710; (Aug 1997) 41787; (Sep 1997) 41838; (Nov 1997) 41923; (Dec 1997) 41975
Privatisation (Nov 1997) 41923
State Property Fund (Mar 1997) 41551
Supervisory Council (Mar 1997) 41551
Treasury bills sale (Dec 1997) 41975
Wage arrears (Jun 1997) 41710
World Bank (Aug 1997) 41787
Electoral law: (Sep 1997) 41837; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41923; (Dec 1997) 41975
Foreign relations:
Baltic states (May 1997) 41657
Belarus
Belarusian President's visit to Ukraine (May 1997) 41660
Summit meeting (Jan 1997) 41459
European Union (EU) (Sep 1997) 41838
Poland (May 1997) 41657
Romania (Jun 1997) 41705–6
Russia
Ban on Russian military flights (Apr 1997) 41611
Black Sea fleet (May 1997) 41659–60
Failure of Ukrainian legislature to ratify agreement on division of Soviet assets (Feb 1997) 41509
Military co-operation talks (Aug 1997) 41787
Naval manoeuvres (Oct 1997) 41878–9
Presidential summit (Nov 1997) 41922–3
Sevastopol tensions (Jan 1997) 41459
Treaty signed (May 1997) 41659–60
Foreign trade:
Korea, South (Sep 1997) 41838
Russia (Nov 1997) 41922–3
USA (Sep 1997) 41838
Hromada (Community) opposition movement: (Sep 1997) 41837
Left-wing electoral bloc formed: (Nov 1997) 41923
Media: (Aug 1997) 41787; (Sep 1997) 41838
Nuclear issues:
Chernobyl power station
Aid for (Sep 1997) 41838; (Nov 1997) 41923
Closure delayed (Feb 1997) 41509; (Sep 1997) 41838
Programme for closure (Apr 1997) 41611
Take-over plan by national energy company (Sep 1997) 41838
Peasants Party of Ukraine (SePU): (Nov 1997) 41923
People's Council (legislature): Immunity granted to Zvyagilsky (Feb 1997) 41508
Political Council: (Feb 1997) 41508
President:
Crimea legislation vetoed (Oct 1997) 41878
Electoral law dispute with Supreme Council (Sep 1997) 41837; (Oct 1997) 41878
Government reshuffle (Feb 1997) 41508
Legislators stripped of parliamentary immunity (Dec 1997) 41975
Meetings with
Belarus President (Jan 1997) 41459
Polish President (May 1997) 41657
Russian President (May 1997) 41659–60; (Nov 1997) 41922–3
Reappointment of Tabachnyk as adviser (Sep 1997) 41837
Russia blamed for difficult Ukraine-Russia relations (Feb 1997) 41509
State of the nation address (Mar 1997) 41551
Prime Minister:
Lazarenko replaced by Durdynets (Jun 1997) 41709
Pustovoytenko appointed (Jul 1997) 41751
Security:
Demonstrations (Jun 1997) 41710; (Aug 1997) 41787
Killings
Journalists (Sep 1997) 41838
Minister (Sep 1997) 41838

UGANDA (contd)
Newspaper editor (Aug 1997) 41787; (Sep 1997) 41838
Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU): (Nov 1997) 41923
Supreme Council:
Electoral law (Sep 1997) 41837; (Nov 1997) 41923
Rejection of presidential nominee for prosecutor general (Dec 1997) 41975
Yedinist (Unity) parliamentary faction: (Sep 1997) 41837

UN *see* UNITED NATIONS

UNCED *see* UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCED)

UNCHR *see* UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (UNCHR)

UNDP *see* UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

UNESCO *see* UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION (UNESCO)

UNHCR *see* UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

UNICEF *see* UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

UNIDO *see* UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (UNIDO)

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)
Air crash: (Dec 1997) 41980
Appointments: Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41569
Arms deal with France: (Dec 1997) 41980
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41569
Foreign relations:
Iran (Dec 1997) 41981
Sudan (Feb 1997) 41482
Foreign trade: France (Dec 1997) 41980

UNITED KINGDOM
Anguilla: *see* ANGUILLA
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41646–7
Bermuda: *see* BERMUDA
British Virgin Islands: *see* BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41646–7
Conservative Party:
By-election defeat (Feb 1997) 41515
Corruption allegations (Mar 1997) 41562; (Jul 1997) 41744; (Aug 1997) 41781
Election campaign (Mar 1997) 41562; (Apr 1997) 41599–600
Election defeat (May 1997) 41646–7
Eurosceptics (Jan 1997) 41467; (Oct 1997) 41885
Fragility of government (Jan 1997) 41467
Hague
Elected party leader (Jun 1997) 41700
Marriage (Dec 1997) 41969
Leadership contest (May 1997) 41648; (Jun 1997) 41700
Resignations
Major as leader (May 1997) 41648
MP over sleaze allegations (Oct 1997) 41885; (Nov 1997) 41925
Constitutional reform: (Dec 1997) 41969
Corruption:
see also Trials
Downey "cash-for-questions" report (Mar 1997) 41562; (Jul 1997) 41744; (Aug 1997) 41781; (Nov 1997) 41925
Glasgow Labour councillors investigation (Sep 1997) 41827
Hamilton (Mar 1997) 41562; (May 1997) 41646; (Jul 1997) 41744; (Nov 1997) 41925
Labour MPs (Jun 1997) 41699–700; (Aug 1997) 41781; (Dec 1997) 41969

UNITED KINGDOM (contd)
Nolan Committee on standards in public life (Jul 1997) 41744
Defence:
Armed forces
Gulf War syndrome controversy (Feb 1997) 41515
Gurkhas (Feb 1997) 41494
NATO stabilisation force (S-For) (Jul 1997) 41749
Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Royal yacht replacement announcement (Jan 1997) 41467
Devolution plans: (May 1997) 41647; (Sep 1997) 41826–7
Drugs:
Appointment of "drugs tsar" (Oct 1997) 41886
MI6 role (Aug 1997) 41780–1
Economy:
Autumn statement (Nov 1997) 41925
Bank of England (May 1997) 41647; (Jun 1997) 41699; (Aug 1997) 41781
Beef (BSE) crisis (Jan 1997) 41467; 41469; (Feb 1997) 41516–17; (Mar 1997) 41564; (Dec 1997) 41969
Budget (Jul 1997) 41744
Chancellor's Mansion House speech (Jun 1997) 41699
European Monetary Union (EMU) preparations (Nov 1997) 41925
Financial reforms (May 1997) 41647–8; (Jun 1997) 41699
Halifax flotation (Jun 1997) 41700
Interest rates (Aug 1997) 41781; (Nov 1997) 41925
Monetary policy committee (Jun 1997) 41699
Pay rises Cabinet row (Sep 1997) 41827
Stock market fall (Oct 1997) 41861
Toyota warning if UK remained outside single currency (Jan 1997) 41467
Trade unions (May 1997) 41648
Education: Queen's Speech (May 1997) 41647
Elections:
By-elections
Beckenham (Nov 1997) 41925
Conservative defeat (Feb 1997) 41515
Paisley South (Nov 1997) 41925
Winchester (Oct 1997) 41886; (Nov 1997) 41925–6
General
Campaign (Mar 1997) 41562; (Apr 1997) 41599
Victory for Labour Party (May 1997) 41646–7
Environment: Energy-saving tax concessions (Nov 1997) 41925
European Union (EU):
Amsterdam summit (Jun 1997) 41700–1
Beef (BSE) crisis (Feb 1997) 41516–17; (Mar 1997) 41564; (Dec 1997) 41969
EMU preparations (Nov 1997) 41925
Eurofighter (Dec 1997) 41968–9
Fishing quotas (Apr 1997) 41603
Labour government policy (May 1997) 41648
Labour MEPs suspended from Party (Oct 1997) 41885–6
Multi-speed Europe question (Jan 1997) 41468
Single currency question (Jan 1997) 41467; (Oct 1997) 41885; (Nov 1997) 41935
Tobacco advertising ban (Dec 1997) 41968
UK election campaign (Apr 1997) 41600
Foreign relations:
Argentina
see also FALKLAND (MALVINAS) ISLANDS
Anti-British bomb incident (Nov 1997) 41906
Invitation to Menem to visit UK (Nov 1997) 41906
South Atlantic fisheries negotiations (Jan 1997) 41440
Visit to Falklands by relatives of Argentinian soldiers killed in 1982 war (Jan 1997) 41440
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Jul 1997) 41749
Burma (Feb 1997) 41501; (Sep 1997) 41823
Caribbean (Jan 1997) 41443
China *see* HONG KONG
Cyprus (Jan 1997) 41461–2; (Apr 1997) 41603; (Sep 1997) 41835

UNITED KINGDOM (contd)
Egypt (Nov 1997) 41935
Fiji (Sep 1997) 41825
Gulf Co-Operation Council (GCC) (Dec 1997) 41981
Hong Kong, Opening of new consulate building (Jan 1997) 41447
India, Visit of Queen (Oct 1997) 41865
Iraq (Nov 1997) 41938
Israel (Nov 1997) 41937
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Labour government policy (May 1997) 41648
Liberia (Mar 1997) 41528
Libya, Lockerbie (Jun 1997) 41713; (Oct 1997) 41891; (Dec 1997) 41983
Malaysia (Sep 1997) 41823
Nigeria, Flights banned (May 1997) 41625
Pakistan (Oct 1997) 41865
Palestinians (Aug 1997) 41795
Peru (Feb 1997) 41488
Saudi Arabia, Nurses' murder trial (Sep 1997) 41841–2; (Oct 1997) 41888; (Nov 1997) 41936
Slovakia (Nov 1997) 41931–2
South Pacific Commission (Oct 1997) 41871
Spain *see* GIBRALTAR
Sri Lanka (Apr 1997) 41588
USA, Woodward (UK au-pair) murder case (Oct 1997) 41854; (Nov 1997) 41903
Yemen (Nov 1997) 41936
Zaïre (May 1997) 41622
Zimbabwe (Oct 1997) 41850
Foreign trade:
see also European Union (EU)
Beef BSE/CJD link crisis: *see* Economy: Beef crisis
France (Apr 1997) 41601
Russia (Nov 1997) 41921
Gibraltar: *see* GIBRALTAR
Health:
Beef (BSE) crisis (Jan 1997) 41467; 41469; (Feb 1997) 41516–17; (Mar 1997) 41564; (Dec 1997) 41969
BSE-CJD links inquiry (Dec 1997) 41969
E coli food poisoning (Jan 1997) 41467; (Apr 1997) 41600
Election campaign issues (Apr 1997) 41599–600
Food safety council announced (Jan 1997) 41467
Gulf War syndrome controversy (Feb 1997) 41515
Persistent vegetative state (PVS) patients (Mar 1997) 41562–3
Tobacco advertising ban controversy (May 1997) 41647; (Nov 1997) 41924–5; (Dec 1997) 41968
Heritage Department: Renamed (Jul 1997) 41744
House of Commons: Sinn Féin MPs banned from House (May 1997) 41648
Human rights: McAliskey detention (Feb 1997) 41516; (Mar 1997) 41563
Immigration and emigration:
Asylum issues
Romanies from Slovakia (Nov 1997) 41931–2
Ruling on social security rights (Feb 1997) 41516
Ireland, Northern: *see* IRELAND, NORTHERN
Labour Party:
Benefits cuts proposals (Dec 1997) 41969
By-election success (Feb 1997) 41515
Disciplinary action against MPs (Jun 1997) 41699–700; (Aug 1997) 41781; (Dec 1997) 41969
Election campaign (Apr 1997) 41599–600
Election success (May 1997) 41646–7
First budget (Jul 1997) 41744
Formula One donation controversy (Nov 1997) 41924–5; (Dec 1997) 41968
Glasgow councillors suspended (Sep 1997) 41827
Policy initiatives (May 1997) 41647–8
Royal yacht decision criticised (Jan 1997) 41467
Suspension of MEPs (Oct 1997) 41885–6
Taxation plans (Jul 1997) 41744
Law:
Handgun ban (Jun 1997) 41700

UNITED KINGDOM (contd)
Ruling on brain damage deaths (Mar 1997) 41562
Liberal Democratic Party:
Election campaign (Apr 1997) 41600
Election results (May 1997) 41646
Role in government (Jul 1997) 41744
Montserrat: *see* MONTSERRAT
Obituaries:
Diana Princess of Wales (Aug 1997) 41780; (Sep 1997) 41845
MPs (Jan 1997) 41467
Thomas, George (former Speaker) (Sep 1997) 41827
Political parties: (May 1997) 41647
Prime Minister:
Amsterdam EU summit (Jun 1997) 41700–1
General election called (Mar 1997) 41562
Limited pay rise accepted by Blair (Sep 1997) 41827
Major's government in difficulties (Jan 1997) 41467
Meeting with Argentine President (Jun 1997) 41680
Queen and royal family:
Death of Princess of Wales (Aug 1997) 41780; (Sep 1997) 41845
Queen's Speech (May 1997) 41647
Queen's visits to India and Pakistan (Oct 1997) 41865
Royal yacht replacement announcement (Jan 1997) 41467
Racial issues: Inquest on Stephen Lawrence (Feb 1997) 41515–16
Referendums: Devolution in Scotland and Wales (Sep 1997) 41826–7
Resignations:
Conservative MP (Oct 1997) 41885
Conservative Party leader (May 1997) 41648
St Helena: *see* ST HELENA
Scientific research: Cloning (Feb 1997) 41522
Scotland:
Devolution question (Apr 1997) 41600; (Sep 1997) 41826
E-coli deaths (Jan 1997) 41467; (Apr 1997) 41600
Security:
see also IRELAND, NORTHERN; Law; Racial issues
Bombing of Arab newspaper office (Jan 1997) 41467
Farmers' blockades of ports over beef imports (Dec 1997) 41969
Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) (May 1997) 41648
Letter-bombing campaign foiled by Danish police (Jan 1997) 41469
MI5 allegations by former agent (Aug 1997) 41780
MI6 new role against drug trafficking (Aug 1997) 41780–1
Prison ship arrival (Mar 1997) 41562
Trials:
Aitken libel case collapse (Jun 1997) 41699
Bridgewater Three released by Appeal Court (Feb 1997) 41515
Forsyth (Nadir aide) released by Appeal Court (Jan 1997) 41467
McDonald's libel case (Jun 1997) 41700
Sarwar (suspended Labour MP) (Dec 1997) 41969
Westminster City Council "gerrymandering" (Dec 1997) 41969
Whitemoor escape trial abandoned (Jan 1997) 41467–8
Turks and Caicos Islands: *see* TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS
Wales: Devolution question (Apr 1997) 41600; (Sep 1997) 41826–7
War crimes:
Conference on Nazi gold ownership (May 1997) 41666; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Dec 1997) 41984
Nazi gold report (May 1997) 41666
Sawoniuk (Sep 1997) 41845
Serafinowicz trial collapse (Jan 1997) 41475

UNITED KINGDOM (contd)
Welfare state reform plans: (Nov 1997) 41925; (Dec 1997) 41969

UNITED NATIONS
Afghanistan:
Meeting of representatives of neighbouring countries and formation of contact group (Dec 1997) 41966
Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) (Mar 1997) 41542
Peace efforts (Jan 1997) 41451–2
Talibaan agreement to end opium production (Nov 1997) 41913
Angola: (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41850; (Nov 1997) 41899
Appointments: Secretariat (Jan 1997) 41474
Bosnia-Herzegovina:
Mostar police criticised (Mar 1997) 41556
Resignation of envoy for missing persons (Mar 1997) 41555–6
War Crimes Tribunal
Appeal by Erdemovic against sentence (Jan 1997) 41456
Blaskic (Jun 1997) 41704
Bosnian Croat suspects (Oct 1997) 41874–5; (Dec 1997) 41979
Kupreskic and Furundzija (Dec 1997) 41979
Tadic (May 1997) 41654
Trial of alleged Muslim and Croat war criminals (Mar 1997) 41556
Burundi:
Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA) report (Apr 1997) 41574
Genocide tribunal proposal rejected (Jul 1997) 41721
Government forcibly "regrouping" people (Mar 1997) 41526
Intervention request for dispute with Tanzania (Oct 1997) 41851
UNESCO peace conference postponed (Jun 1997) 41670
Cambodia:
General Assembly seat controversy (Sep 1997) 41822
Khmer Rouge inquiry (Dec 1997) 41961–2
Report on coup atrocities (Sep 1997) 41821–2
China: Veto of proposal to send observers to Guatemala (Jan 1997) 41441
Congo:
Call for Security Council to approve dispatch of international troops (Jun 1997) 41671
Mediation mission (Aug 1997) 41759
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre): Massacre allegations inquiry (Jun 1997) 41669; (Jul 1997) 41723; (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848; (Nov 1997) 41896–7; (Dec 1997) 41946
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites): (Jun 1997) 41717
Croatia:
Eastern Slavonia
Aid (Jan 1997) 41456
Appointment of new administrator (Aug 1997) 41791
Elections (Apr 1997) 41605–6
Transitional Administration extended (Jul 1997) 41749
Cuba:
USA accused of biological attacks (May 1997) 41634
Vote against US sanctions (Nov 1997) 41907
Cyprus:
Anxieties over arms build-up (Jan 1997) 41461
Direct talks (Jun 1997) 41702; (Jul 1997) 41746; (Aug 1997) 41788–9; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Nov 1997) 41929
Eritrea: Protest to Security Council over Sudanese activities (Jul 1997) 41720
Falkland (Malvinas) Islands: Decolonisation Committee resolution (Jun 1997) 41680
Finances:
Turner donation (Sep 1997) 41845
USA
Debt pledge (Jan 1997) 41474–5; (Feb 1997) 41484; (Jun 1997) 41717; (Sep 1997) 41845
Veto on budget arrears payments by Congress (Nov 1997) 41903
General Assembly:
Addressed by
Pakistan Prime Minister (Sep 1997) 41819
US President (Sep 1997) 41845
Cambodia seat controversy (Sep 1997) 41822
Opening of 52nd assembly (Sep 1997) 41845
Security Council reform plans (Mar 1997) 41570
Georgia: Abkhazia peace talks (Jul 1997) 41753; (Oct 1997) 41878; (Nov 1997) 41922
Greece-Macedonia dispute over name of Macedonia: (Jun 1997) 41704
Guatemala:
Truth Commission panel (Feb 1997) 41491
UN observers vetoed by China (Jan 1997) 41441
Haiti:
Civilian police mission (Dec 1997) 41956
Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) (Jan 1997) 41438; (Dec 1997) 41956
Indonesia: East Timor question (May 1997) 41644; (Jul 1997) 41735; (Aug 1997) 41778
Iraq:
Compensation Commission report on reparation payments (Mar 1997) 41567
Complaint to Security Council over Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652
Expulsion of US inspectors (Nov 1997) 41938
Food delivery (Mar 1997) 41567; (Apr 1997) 41613
Oil for food deal (Jun 1997) 41715; (Aug 1997) 41793; (Sep 1997) 41842; (Oct 1997) 41888; (Dec 1997) 41980
Special Commission (UNSCOM) head appointed (May 1997) 41661
Suspension of oil exports (Dec 1997) 41980
Travel ban on Iraqi officials (Nov 1997) 41938
Violation of southern air exclusion zone by Iraqi helicopters (Apr 1997) 41613
Weapons inspections
Access to presidential and sovereign sites withheld (Dec 1997) 41980
Exclusion of US inspectors called for by Iraq (Oct 1997) 41888
Long-range missile parts agreement (Feb 1997) 41519–20
Russian intervention to calm crisis (Nov 1997) 41938
Special Commission (UNSCOM) reports (Apr 1997) 41613; (Oct 1997) 41888
Suspension of UNSCOM operations (Oct 1997) 41888
Withdrawal of UNSCOM (Nov 1997) 41938
Korea, North: Abducted South Korean farmers returned (Oct 1997) 41863
Liberia: Disarmament statistics (Jan 1997) 41434
Libya:
Air embargo breached (May 1997) 41664
Arab league call to ease sanctions (Sep 1997) 41844
Lockerbie trial report (Dec 1997) 41983
Nigeria: Sanctions (Jul 1997) 41724
Panama: Withdrawal of support for Panama Canal congress (Sep 1997) 41810
Peacekeeping forces:
Albania (Apr 1997) 41596–7; (Jun 1997) 41703; (Jul 1997) 41747; (Aug 1997) 41789
Angola Observer Mission (UNOMA) (Jul 1997) 41722
Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III)
Call on government to suspend offensive (Jun 1997) 41671
Extension of mandate (Feb 1997) 41480; (Apr 1997) 41576
Pressure for inauguration of unity government (Mar 1997) 41528
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canadian forces (Jan 1997) 41438
Croatia (Eastern Slavonia) (UNTAES) (Jul 1997) 41749
Macedonia (Unpredep) (Apr 1997) 41605
Sierra Leone (Jun 1997) 41672

UNITED NATIONS (contd)
Somalia
Belgian paratroopers trial (Jun 1997) 41696
Canada inquiry report (Jul 1997) 41728
Italian paratroopers torture allegations (Jun 1997) 41697; (Aug 1997) 41783
Resolutions (General Assembly):
Cuban sanctions condemned (Nov 1997) 41907
Israel
Called on to pay damages for Qana shelling (Jun 1997) 41715
Settlements issue (Apr 1997) 41614; (Aug 1997) 41795
Resolutions (Security Council):
Angola, Sanctions threat against UNITA (Aug 1997) 41759; (Sep 1997) 41803; (Oct 1997) 41850; (Nov 1997) 41899
Iraq (Nov 1997) 41938; (Dec 1997) 41980
Libya (May 1997) 41664
Rwanda:
Genocide tribunal
Akayesu trial (Jan 1997) 41431
Arrest of Belgian journalist (Jul 1997) 41721
Arrests of leading suspects (Jul 1997) 41720–1
Extradition of suspect from Switzerland (Jun 1997) 41622
Intimidation of witnesses (Jan 1997) 41431
Nyiramasuko guilty plea (Sep 1997) 41801
Report on mismanagement of tribunal (Feb 1997) 41477
Killing of employees (Feb 1997) 41477–8
Secretariat: (Jan 1997) 41474
Secretary-General:
Reform pledge (Jan 1997) 41474–5; (Mar 1997) 41570; (Jul 1997) 41757
Reform proposals (Sep 1997) 41845
Security Council:
Albania crisis (Mar 1997) 41558
Cyprus question (Aug 1997) 41789
Enlargement plans (Mar 1997) 41570
Eritrean protest over Sudan (Jul 1997) 41720
Iraq "oil-for-food" deal (Sep 1997) 41842; (Dec 1997) 41980
Seats questions (Aug 1997) 41768
Temporary seat for Slovenia (Oct 1997) 41874
Western Sahara MINURSO mandate extended (Sep 1997) 41843–4
Sierra Leone:
Coup condemned (May 1997) 41625; (Sep 1997) 41803
Sanctions (Oct 1997) 41850
Somalia:
Flood relief (Dec 1997) 41949
Ultimatum from Somaliland President (Mar 1997) 41527
Tajikistan:
Donor conference (Nov 1997) 41913
Hostage crisis (Feb 1997) 41500; (Mar 1997) 41542; (Sep 1997) 41818; (Dec 1997) 41966
Observer mission mandate extended (Mar 1997) 41542; (Jun 1997) 41694; (Sep 1997) 41818; (Nov 1997) 41913
Peace accord (Jun 1997) 41693
Turkey: Muted reaction to Turkish offensive against Kurds (May 1997) 41652
Western Sahara:
Lisbon talks (Aug 1997) 41797
London talks (Jul 1997) 41756
Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) (Mar 1997) 41568; (May 1997) 41664; (Sep 1997) 41843–4; (Oct 1997) 41892
Special envoy (Mar 1997) 41568; (Apr 1997) 41616; (Jun 1997) 41713; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41843
World Food Programme (WFP) *see* WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)
Zaïre:
see also Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre)
Ceasefire plan rejected by Kabila (Mar 1997) 41525
Special envoy's talks with Kabila (May 1997) 41622

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)
Iraq: Malnutrition of children (Jun 1997) 41715
Korea, North: (Sep 1997) 41817

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (UNCHR)
China: Critical resolution defeated (Apr 1997) 41589
Cuba: (Apr 1997) 41585
High Commissioner: (Mar 1997) 41570; (Jun 1997) 41717; (Dec 1997) 41947
Indonesia: East Timor (Jul 1997) 41735
Rwanda: (Mar 1997) 41525–6; (Aug 1997) 41761; (Dec 1997) 41947

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCED), Summit: (Jun 1997) 41717

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)
Human Development Index (HDI): (Jun 1997) 41718
Human Development Report: (Jun 1997) 41717
Human Poverty Index (HPI): (Jun 1997) 41718

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATION (UNESCO), Burundi: (Jun 1997) 41670

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)
Burundi: (Feb 1997) 41478; (Jul 1997) 41721
Chad: (Oct 1997) 41852
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre): (Sep 1997) 41800; (Oct 1997) 41848; (Nov 1997) 41896–7
Eritrea: Officials expelled (May 1997) 41627
Repatriation to Ethiopia: (Mar 1997) 41526
Rwanda: Massacre in Mudende camp (Aug 1997) 41761
Sudan: (Jan 1997) 41433; (Mar 1997) 41526
Western Sahara: (Jul 1997) 41756
Zaïre: (Feb 1997) 41477; (Mar 1997) 41526; (Apr 1997) 41573

UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (UNIDO), Director-General: (Apr 1997) 41618

UNITED STATES
Abortion:
Bombing of clincs (Jan 1997) 41437–8
Partial birth abortions illegal (May 1997) 41629–30
Presidential veto of legislation (Oct 1997) 41854
Affirmative action ruling: (Apr 1997) 41580
Aid to:
Cambodia, Cut (Oct 1997) 41870
Korea, North (Apr 1997) 41593; (Sep 1997) 41817
Appointments:
CIA Director (Jul 1997) 41727
Congress office holders (Jan 1997) 41437
Diplomatic (May 1997) 41642–3; (Sep 1997) 41807
Military (Mar 1997) 41531; (Jun 1997) 41676; (Jul 1997) 41727; (Sep 1997) 41807
President's nominations for Cabinet (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41530–1; (Apr 1997) 41580
Speaker (Jan 1997) 41436–7
Arizona: Governor convicted of fraud (Sep 1997) 41808
Arms deals with:
Indonesia, Cancelled (Jun 1997) 41685
Romania, Suspended (Aug 1997) 41791
Aviation:
Air crash (Jan 1997) 41438
TWA air crash investigations (Mar 1997) 41531; (Sep 1997) 41808; (Nov 1997) 41903
Biological weapons: Cuban accusations (May 1997) 41634; (Aug 1997) 41769
Cabinet: (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Apr 1997) 41580

UNITED STATES (contd)
California: Affirmative action ruling (Apr 1997) 41580; (Aug 1997) 41764; (Nov 1997) 41903
Census data: Fastest growing cities (Nov 1997) 41903
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA):
Apology for Gulf War intelligence failings (Apr 1997) 41580
Director nomination (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41530–1; (Jul 1997) 41727
Espionage charges against former officer (Mar 1997) 41531
Iran execution of US spy (Sep 1997) 41843
Killer of CIA employees convicted (Nov 1997) 41903; 41914
Libya
Execution of alleged spies (Jan 1997) 41473
Plot by CIA to assassinate Kadhafi alleged (May 1997) 41664
Nicholson trial (Jun 1997) 41677
Chemical weapons: (Apr 1997) 41617; (Aug 1997) 41797
Civil rights:
Affirmative action (Apr 1997) 41580; (Aug 1997) 41764
Megan's law (requirement on local authorities to inform community about presence of sex offenders) (Aug 1997) 41764
New York Police Department (NYPD) investigation launched (Aug 1997) 41765
Congress: 105th Congress convened (Jan 1997) 41436
Constitution:
Affirmative action ruling (Apr 1997) 41580; (Aug 1997) 41764
Amendment on federal balanced budgets failure (Feb 1997) 41484–5
Line-item veto ruled unconstitutional (Apr 1997) 41580
Megan's law ruling (requirement on local authorities to inform community about presence of sex offenders) (Aug 1997) 41764
Corruption:
see also Democratic Party: Election funds controversy; President: Whitewater affair
Arizona governor (Sep 1997) 41808
Cisneros (former Housing Secretary) (Dec 1997) 41952
Espy (former Agriculture Secretary) (Aug 1997) 41764; (Sep 1997) 41808; (Dec 1997) 41952
Ethics investigations into Cabinet nominees (Jan 1997) 41436
Fundraising tapes withheld from House and Senate investigative committees (Nov 1997) 41903
Gingrich (Jan 1997) 41437; (Apr 1997) 41580
Huang for campaign funding alleged Chinese military link (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Jul 1997) 41725
Justice Department review of campaign fundraising scandal (Sep 1997) 41806; (Oct 1997) 41853; (Nov 1997) 41901–2; (Dec 1997) 41951
Lippo group (Indonesian) fundraising links (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41530; (Apr 1997) 41579
Teamsters trade union (Aug 1997) 41765–6
Death penalty:
Executions
Ku Klux Klan member (Jun 1997) 41677
Mexican (Jun 1997) 41677
McVeigh (Oklahoma bomber) (Aug 1997) 41765
Defence:
see also Arms trade; Nuclear issues
Aircraft carrier despatched to Gulf (Oct 1997) 41888
Armed forces
Appointment of woman general (Mar 1997) 41531
Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff nominations (Jun 1997) 41676; (Jul 1997) 41727; (Sep 1997) 41807
Court martial over rape allegation (Jan 1997) 41437
Gender relations report (Dec 1997) 41951–2

UNITED STATES (contd)
Gulf War syndrome reports (Oct 1997) 41855
Sexual harassment cases (Jan 1997) 41437; (Feb 1997) 41486; (Mar 1997) 41531; (Apr 1997) 41581; (May 1997) 41629; (Jun 1997) 41676; (Jul 1997) 41727; (Sep 1997) 41807–8
Bases
Japan
Okinawa land-lease legislation (Apr 1997) 41591
Uranium bullets fired in error (Feb 1997) 41497
Computer sales to Russia inquiry (Oct 1997) 41855
Kazakhstan co-operation accord (Nov 1997) 41912
Kazakhstan-Russia-US military exercises (Sep 1997) 41818
Lockheed Martin merger plans (Jul 1997) 41727
Military strategy report (Dec 1997) 41951
NATO
Helsinki summit (Mar 1997) 41569
President's State of the Union address (Feb 1997) 41484
Refusal to sign draft landmines treaty (Sep 1997) 41845
Review (May 1997) 41629
US-Uzbek military manoeuvres (Jun 1997) 41693
Democratic Party:
Balanced budget accord (May 1997) 41628
Election funds controversy (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41529–30; (Apr 1997) 41579–80; (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41764; (Sep 1997) 41806; (Oct 1997) 41853; (Nov 1997) 41901–2; (Dec 1997) 41951
Fast track trade legislation question (Nov 1997) 41901
Gubernatorial and mayoral elections (Nov 1997) 41902
New York mayoral nomination (Sep 1997) 41808
Drugs:
Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) (Feb 1997) 41489
Medical use of marijuana ruling (Apr 1997) 41580
Narcotics list, Removal of Syria and Lebanon (Nov 1997) 41937–8
Tobacco *see* Health
Economy:
Budget
Balanced budget
Amendment failure (Mar 1997) 41531
Bipartisan accord (May 1997) 41628; (Jun 1997) 41675; (Jul 1997) 41726
Legislation signed (Aug 1997) 41763–4
Line-item veto used (Aug 1997) 41763–4
Deficit (Jan 1997) 41438
Fall in federal budget deficit (Oct 1997) 41855
Federal balanced budgets amendment failure (Feb 1997) 41484–5
Presentation of 1998 budget (Feb 1997) 41484
Defence manufacturers' merger plans (Jul 1997) 41727
Disaster relief bill (May 1997) 41676
Stock market fall (Oct 1997) 41861
Strike at United Parcel Service (UPS) (Aug 1997) 41765–6
Taxation (May 1997) 41628; (Jun 1997) 41675–6; (Oct 1997) 41855
Tobacco industry tax credit repealed (Sep 1997) 41807
Trade unions (Aug 1997) 41765–6
UN debt pledge (Jan 1997) 41474–5
Unemployment (Dec 1997) 41952
Urban poverty (Dec 1997) 41952
Washington DC federal assistance plan (Jan 1997) 41438
Education: (Feb 1997) 41484
Elections:
Campaign finance reform (Feb 1997) 41484; (Oct 1997) 41854
Gubernatorial and mayoral (Nov 1997) 41902

UNITED STATES (contd)
Mayoral, New York, Candidates (Sep 1997) 41808
New Mexico special election (May 1997) 41630
Presidential, Campaign finance controversy (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41529–30; (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41769; (Sep 1997) 41806; (Oct 1997) 41853; (Nov 1997) 41901–2; (Dec 1997) 41951
Environment:
Kyoto conference (Dec 1997) 41984
Whaling (Oct 1997) 41892
Espionage:
see also Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
Arrests (Oct 1997) 41855
CIA former officer (Mar 1997) 41531
FBI former officer (Pitts) (Mar 1997) 41531; (Jun 1997) 41677
Euthanasia:
Oregon (Feb 1997) 41486; (Oct 1997) 41854; (Nov 1997) 41902–3
Supreme Court hearings (Jan 1997) 41437; (Jun 1997) 41677; (Oct 1997) 41854
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI):
Alabama bombing investigation re-opened (Jul 1997) 41727
Chinese government contributions to Democratic Party funds allegations (Nov 1997) 41902
Democratic Party presidential election funding investigations (Jan 1997) 41436; (Mar 1997) 41529–30
Egyptian letter bomb warning (Jan 1997) 41438
Espionage sting operation (Oct 1997) 41855
Forensic laboratory criticised (Apr 1997) 41581
Gingrich inquiry (Jan 1997) 41437
Oklahoma bombing lawsuits (Apr 1997) 41581
Pitts' guilty plea on charges of spying for Russia (Mar 1997) 41531; (Jun 1997) 41677
Saudi Arabia Al-Khobar bomb investigations (Jan 1997) 41472–3
Texas militia siege (Apr 1997) 41581
TWA airliner crash investigations (Mar 1997) 41531; (Sep 1997) 41808; (Nov 1997) 41903
Florida: Killings (Jan 1997) 41438
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (Dec 1997) 41966
Albania (May 1997) 41653
Argentina (Oct 1997) 41858
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736
Austria (Jul 1997) 41754
Azerbaijan (Aug 1997) 41788; (Sep 1997) 41836
Belarus (Mar 1997) 41550; (May 1997) 41659; (Sep 1997) 41838
Bolivia (Jun 1997) 41680
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Jul 1997) 41749; (Aug 1997) 41790; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Dec 1997) 41978
Brazil (Oct 1997) 41857
Burma (Jun 1997) 41686; (Jul 1997) 41736
Cambodia (Jun 1997) 41683; (Jul 1997) 41734; (Oct 1997) 41870
Canada (Apr 1997) 41581–2; (May 1997) 41630
Chile (Oct 1997) 41858
China
Anger at Clinton's meeting with dissident Wei (Dec 1997) 41960
Chinese army chief's visit to USA (Aug 1997) 41771
Chinese Foreign Minister's visit (Apr 1997) 41589
Democratic Party campaign fund allegations (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41529–30; (Apr 1997) 41580; (Jul 1997) 41725; (Nov 1997) 51902
Hong Kong (Mar 1997) 41541; 41542; (Apr 1997) 41589
Human rights (Jan 1997) 41445–6; (Feb 1997) 41493
Jiang's visit to USA (Oct 1997) 41860
Visits by US
Military chief (May 1997) 41638
Secretary of State (Feb 1997) 41493
Vice-President (Mar 1997) 41541
Colombia

UNITED STATES (contd)
Bilateral agreement on drugs (Aug 1997) 41767
Carter intervention in hostage crisis (Jun 1997) 41681
Criticism of failure to reduce drug production (Mar 1997) 41533; (Apr 1997) 41583
Defence Minister appointment controversy (Jan 1997) 41440–1
Human rights questions (Jul 1997) 41731; (Aug 1997) 41767
Congo, Democratic Republic of (formerly Zaïre) (Dec 1997) 41946
Croatia (Jul 1997) 41750; (Oct 1997) 41874
Cuba
Biological warfare accusations against USA (May 1997) 41634; (Aug 1997) 41769
Charges of US political interference (Jul 1997) 41731
Fly-past by anti-Castro Cuban exiles (Feb 1997) 41490
Helms-Burton Act
Canada (Apr 1997) 41581–2
Condemned by Rio Group (Aug 1997) 41768
EU/US talks (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585
Ibero-American summit (Nov 1997) 41907
Suspension of Title III provision (Jan 1997) 41442
Tightening of sanctions (Jun 1997) 41682
UN resolution condemning sanctions (Nov 1997) 41907
Media permits question (Feb 1997) 41490
Rejection of US financial assistance package (Jan 1997) 41442
Return of Cubans involved in hijackings (Oct 1997) 41859
Travel restrictions relaxed for Papal visit plans (Aug 1997) 41769
US elements blamed for terrorist bombing campaign (Sep 1997) 41812
WTO disputes panel to rule on EU case (Feb 1997) 41489–90; (Apr 1997) 41585; (Jun 1997) 41682
Cyprus (Jan 1997) 41461–2; (Jun 1997) 41701–2; (Sep 1997) 41835; (Nov 1997) 41929
Denmark (Jul 1997) 41757
Ecuador (Sep 1997) 41812
Egypt, Visit by US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Ethiopia (Dec 1997) 41949–50
European Union (EU)
Banana imports (May 1997) 41635; (Jun 1997) 41683
Boeing merger with McDonnell Douglas (Jul 1997) 41746
Burma sanctions dispute (Feb 1997) 41501
Cuba Helms-Burton Act sanctions dispute (Jan 1997) 41442; (Feb 1997) 41489–90; (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585; (Jun 1997) 41682; (Sep 1997) 41842; (Oct 1997) 41887
D'Amato Law on Iran sanctions (Sep 1997) 41842
EU-US summit (May 1997) 41651
France (Sep 1997) 41842
Germany (Jan 1997) 41464; (Mar 1997) 41560; (Jun 1997) 41697
Ghana (Jan 1997) 41435
Guatemala (May 1997) 41635
Haiti (Oct 1997) 41859; (Dec 1997) 41956
Hong Kong (Jan 1997) 41447; (Mar 1997) 41542; (Apr 1997) 41589; 41590; (Sep 1997) 41814
India
Expulsion of US envoys (Feb 1997) 41500
Visit of US Commerce Secretary (Dec 1997) 41965
Indonesia (Jun 1997) 41685
Iran
Aircraft carrier despatched to Gulf (Oct 1997) 41888
Execution of US spy (Sep 1997) 41843
Iran-Russia-China missile co-operation allegations (Sep 1997) 41842

UNITED STATES (contd)
MKO placed on list of banned terrorist organisations by USA (Oct 1997) 41888
President Khatami's call for dialogue (Dec 1997) 41980
Prevention of Iranian aircraft purchase from Moldova (Nov 1997) 41939
Reaction to election of President Khatami (Jun 1997) 41716
Saudi Arabia Al-Khobar bomb investigations (Jan 1997) 41473
Iraq
see also UNITED NATIONS, Iraq:
Aircraft carrier despatched to Gulf (Oct 1997) 41888
Deployment of alliance warplanes and naval vessels in Gulf (Nov 1997) 41938
Israel
Adoption of Vanunu by US couple (Oct 1997) 41890
Conversions controversy (Oct 1997) 41889
Extradition of US teenager question (Oct 1997) 41890
Jerusalem suicide bomb condemned (Aug 1997) 41794
Lebanon and Syria policies (Feb 1997) 41517
Netanyahu's visits to USA (Feb 1997) 41517; (Apr 1997) 41614; (Nov 1997) 41937
Palestine Congressional vote on Jerusalem (Jun 1997) 41714
Settlements issue (Feb 1997) 41518; (Mar 1997) 41564–5; (May 1997) 41662; (Sep 1997) 41840
Visit by US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Jamaica (May 1997) 41635
Japan
Bases question (Apr 1997) 41591
Burma sanctions dispute (Feb 1997) 41501
Defence co-operation guidelines (Jun 1997) 41687; (Aug 1997) 41771; (Sep 1997) 41816
Hashimoto's visit to USA (Apr 1997) 41591
Okinawa heliport referendum (Dec 1997) 41959
Uranium bullets fired in error in Okinawa (Feb 1997) 41497
Jordan (Sep 1997) 41839–40; 41841
Kazakhstan (Sep 1997) 41818; (Nov 1997) 41912
Kenya (Apr 1997) 41578
Korea, North
Bilateral talks (Mar 1997) 41538; (Nov 1997) 41910
Food aid negotiations (Feb 1997) 41495; (Apr 1997) 41593; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Sep 1997) 41817
Four country talks proposals (Feb 1997) 41495; (Mar 1997) 41538; (Apr 1997) 41593–4; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Jul 1997) 41737; (Aug 1997) 41772; (Sep 1997) 41817; (Nov 1997) 41911; (Dec 1997) 41959
MIA issues (May 1997) 41641
Military manoeuvres allegations (Jun 1997) 41689
Missile talks (Jun 1997) 41689
New York briefing sessions (Feb 1997) 41495; (Mar 1997) 41538
Korea, South
Arrest of US arms dealer (May 1997) 41641
Financial crisis (Nov 1997) 41909–10
Kuwait (Nov 1997) 41936
Kyrgyzstan (Jul 1997) 41738
Laos (Nov 1997) 41917
Lebanon
Lifting of US travel ban (Jul 1997) 41754
Removal from US narcotics list (Nov 1997) 41937–8
Visit by US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Liberia (Mar 1997) 41528
Libya
CIA alleged plot to assassinate Kadhafi (May 1997) 41664

UNITED STATES (contd)
CIA involvement in alleged espionage case (Jan 1997) 41473
Lockerbie (Jun 1997) 41713; (Oct 1997) 41891
Reaction to violation of UN air embargo (May 1997) 41664
Visit by Farrakhan (Jan 1997) 41474
Macedonia (Jun 1997) 41704
Malaysia (Nov 1997) 41917
Mexico
Anti-drugs efforts (Feb 1997) 41489; (Mar 1997) 41534–5; (May 1997) 41631
Counterinsurgency operations advice for Mexican army allegations (Jan 1997) 41441
Debt repayment (Jan 1997) 41441
Execution in USA of Mexican national (Jun 1997) 41677
Visit by President Clinton (May 1997) 41630–1
Withdrawal of Clinton ambassadorial nominee (Sep 1997) 41807
Middle East peace process
Commission proposals (Mar 1997) 41564–5
Secretary of State Albright (Oct 1997) 41890; (Nov 1997) 41939; (Dec 1997) 41981
Secretary of State Christopher (Jan 1997) 41470
Moldova (Nov 1997) 41939
Nigeria (Oct 1997) 41849
Niue (May 1997) 41646
Pakistan (Nov 1997) 41914
Palestine
Congressional vote on Jerusalem (Jun 1997) 41714
Visit of US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Panama (Dec 1997) 41953
Peru (Apr 1997) 41582; (Sep 1997) 41812
Poland (Apr 1997) 41608; (Jul 1997) 41757
Qatar (Jun 1997) 41716
Russia
Mir-USA-Russia space mission (Apr 1997) 41618; (May 1997) 41666; (Jun 1997) 41718; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41845
NATO enlargement (Feb 1997) 41521
Saudi Arabia
Al-Khobar bomb investigation (Jan 1997) 41472–3; (Mar 1997) 41568; (Sep 1997) 41842
Visit by US Secretary of State (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Visit of Defence Minister to USA (Mar 1997) 41568
Serbia (Feb 1997) 41503
Sierra Leone (May 1997) 41626
South Africa (Jan 1997) 41430
Spain (Oct 1997) 41858
Sri Lanka (Oct 1997) 41865
Sudan (Sep 1997) 41804; (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949
Switzerland (May 1997) 41666
Syria (Sep 1997) 41839–40
Turkey (Dec 1997) 41973
UK, Woodward (UK au-pair) murder case (Oct 1997) 41854; (Nov 1997) 41903
Uzbekistan (Jun 1997) 41693
Vietnam
Investment pact (Nov 1997) 41916
Military agreement and debt rescheduling (Mar 1997) 41546
US ambassador appointed (May 1997) 41642–3
Visit of US Secretary of State (Jun 1997) 41684
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of (FRY) (May 1997) 41655
Zaïre (Apr 1997) 41473; (May 1997) 41621; 41622
Foreign trade:
Argentina, Sanctions (Apr 1997) 41584
Burma (Jan 1997) 41451; (Feb 1997) 41501; (Apr 1997) 41594
China
Boeing sale (Mar 1997) 41541
Information Technology (Oct 1997) 41860

UNITED STATES (contd)
MFN status renewed (May 1997) 41637–8
Sanctions on companies suspected of selling chemical weapons (May 1997) 41638
Textiles accord (Feb 1997) 41493
Trade deficit with China (Oct 1997) 41860
Ecuador (Sep 1997) 41812
European Union (EU), Product safety accord (May 1997) 41651
Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA) discussions (May 1997) 41634
Hong Kong, Sanctions against company accused of selling chemical weapons (May 1997) 41638
India (Dec 1997) 41965
Japan
Initiative on deregulation (Jun 1997) 41687
Shipping dispute (Feb 1997) 41497–8; (Mar 1997) 41540; (Apr 1997) 41591–2; (Sep 1997) 41816; (Oct 1997) 41862
Trade surplus issue (Mar 1997) 41540
Kazakhstan (Nov 1997) 41912
Nuclear technology (Oct 1997) 41860
Pakistan (Apr 1997) 41588
President's "fast track" negotiation authority for free trade pacts (Sep 1997) 41807
Russia (Oct 1997) 41855
Serbia (Jan 1997) 41455
Turkmenistan (Oct 1997) 41866
Ukraine (Sep 1997) 41838
Green party: New Mexico (May 1997) 41630
Guam: *see* GUAM
Gun laws: (Jun 1997) 41676–7; (Oct 1997) 41855
Health:
Breast implant compensation offer (Aug 1997) 41764–5
Healthcare (Feb 1997) 41484; (May 1997) 41628; (Jul 1997) 41726
Human medical experiments without consent, Presidential apology (May 1997) 41630
Medical use of marijuana ruling (Apr 1997) 41580
Tobacco industry
Advertising ruling (Apr 1997) 41580–1
Cigarette manufacturers' admission over addictive nature of product (Mar 1997) 41531
Passive smoking on airlines out-of-court settlement (Oct 1997) 41854
Tax credit repealed (Sep 1997) 41807
Trials (Mar 1997) 41531; (Apr 1997) 41580–1; (May 1997) 41629; (Jun 1997) 41677; (Jul 1997) 41727; (Aug 1997) 41765
House of Representatives:
Ethics Committee (Jan 1997) 41437
Gingrich re-elected as Speaker (Jan 1997) 41436–7
Human rights: New York Police Department (NYPD) allegations (Aug 1997) 41765; (Sep 1997) 41808
Immigration and asylum issues: Cubans (Oct 1997) 41859
Internal Revenue Service (IRS): Proposals to curb "excesses" (Oct 1997) 41855
Mafia: *see* Trials
Masachusetts: Prohibition on companies with business interests in Burma (Feb 1997) 41501
Media: Turner (of CNN) donation to the UN (Sep 1997) 41845
New Mexico: Special election (May 1997) 41630
New York:
Mayoral elections, Democratic Party candidate (Sep 1997) 41808
Murder statistics (Dec 1997) 41952
Police torture allegations (Aug 1997) 41765; (Sep 1997) 41808
Nuclear issues: Nuclear strategy report (Dec 1997) 41951
Obituaries:
Brennan (former Supreme Court justice) (Jul 1997) 41727
Harriman, Pamela (Feb 1997) 41486
Kennedy, Michael (son of Robert) (Dec 1997) 41952
Shabazz, Betty (widow of Malcolm X) (Jun 1997) 41678

UNITED STATES (contd)
Tsongas (former Democratic Senator) (Jan 1997) 41438
Weaver (first black Cabinet minister) (Jul 1997) 41727
Young, Coleman (black civil rights campaigner) (Dec 1997) 41952
Oklahoma bombing trials: *see* Trials
Oregon: Assisted suicide law (Feb 1997) 41486; (Oct 1997) 41854; (Nov 1997) 41902–3
Police: New York Police Department (NYPD) (Aug 1997) 41765
President:
Address to UN General Assembly (Sep 1997) 41845
Apology for human medical experiments without consent (May 1997) 41630
Caribbean summit (May 1997) 41634–5
Central American summit (May 1997) 41634
Election campaign funding controversy (Jan 1997) 41436; (Feb 1997) 41485; (Mar 1997) 41529–30; (Jul 1997) 41725; (Aug 1997) 41764; (Sep 1997) 41806; (Oct 1997) 41853; (Nov 1997) 41901–2; (Dec 1997) 41951
Fast track trade legislation (Sep 1997) 41807; (Nov 1997) 41901
Inauguration of Clinton (Jan 1997) 41435–6
Meetings with
Canadian Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41581–2
Chinese dissident Wei (Dec 1997) 41960
Chinese President (Oct 1997) 41860
Israeli Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41614
Japanese Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41591
Palestinian President (Mar 1997) 41564–5
Russian President (Mar 1997) 41569
Saudi Defence Minister (Mar 1997) 41568
NATO Helsinki summit (Mar 1997) 41569
Race initiative (Dec 1997) 41951
Sexual harassment (Paula Jones) case (Jan 1997) 41436; (May 1997) 41629; (Jun 1997) 41675; (Jul 1997) 41725–6; (Aug 1997) 41764; (Sep 1997) 41806; (Oct 1997) 41853–4; (Nov 1997) 41902; (Dec 1997) 41951
State of the Union address (Feb 1997) 41483–4
Tobacco industry issues (Jul 1997) 41727; (Sep 1997) 41807
Vetoes
Abortion legislation (Oct 1997) 41854
Line-item veto ruled unconstitutional (Apr 1997) 41580; (Jun 1997) 41677
Line-item veto used on budget (Aug 1997) 41763–4
Vice-President
Role in campaign funding controversy (Mar 1997) 41530; (Sep 1997) 41806
Visit to China (Mar 1997) 41541
Visits to
Argentina (Oct 1997) 41858
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Dec 1997) 41978
Brazil (Oct 1997) 41857
Denmark (Jul 1997) 41757
Europe (May 1997) 41651
Mexico (May 1997) 41630–1
Poland (Jul 1997) 41757
Romania (Jul 1997) 41757
Whitewater
Foster death statement (Jul 1997) 41726
Lippo group subpoena (Mar 1997) 41530
McDougal sentenced (Apr 1997) 41579
Resignation and return of special prosecutor (Feb 1997) 41485
Supreme Court ruling on papers (Jun 1997) 41675
Racial issues:
Alabama bombing investigation re-opened (Jul 1997) 41727
Black Panther activist released from prison (Jun 1997) 41677–8
Death of Betty Shabazz (widow of Malcolm X) (Jun 1997) 41678
Farrakhan (Jan 1997) 41435; 41474
Holiday in honour of Martin Luther King (Jan 1997) 41435
Ku Klux Klan (Jun 1997) 41677
Makah tribe (Oct 1997) 41892

UNITED STATES (contd)
Million Woman March (Oct 1997) 41855
Nation of Islam (Jan 1997) 41435; 41474
Obituary of first black Cabinet minister (Jul 1997) 41727
Presidential civil rights initiative (Dec 1997) 41951
Racial classification lawsuit (Jun 1997) 41677
Trial of Burmeister for random murder of a black couple (Feb 1997) 41486; (Mar 1997) 41532
Religious affairs:
Catholic Church sexual abuse damages award (Jul 1997) 41728
Heaven's Gate cult mass suicide (Mar 1997) 41531
Promise Keepers (Oct 1997) 41855
Roman Catholic church (Nov 1997) 41902
Scientologists (Jan 1997) 41464
Southern Baptist Convention Disney boycott (Jun 1997) 41678
Republican Party:
Balanced budget
Amendment failure (Mar 1997) 41531
Bipartisan accord (May 1997) 41628
Budget response (Feb 1997) 41484
Campaign finance reform bill defeat due to Republican filibuster (Oct 1997) 41854
Disaster relief bill defeat (May 1997) 41676
Dissent (Jul 1997) 41726–7
Fast track trade legislation question (Nov 1997) 41901
Funding controversy for Presidential election campaign (Jan 1997) 41436; (Mar 1997) 41530
Gingrich
Ethics investigations (Jan 1997) 41437
Re-elected as Speaker (Jan 1997) 41436–7
Weakened position (Jul 1997) 41726–7
Gubernatorial and mayoral elections (Nov 1997) 41902
New Mexico special election success (May 1997) 41630
Scientific research: Cloning (Feb 1997) 41522; (Mar 1997) 41570
Security:
see also Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
Banning of Iranian opposition group (MKO) (Oct 1997) 41888
Bombing of abortion clinics (Jan 1997) 41437–8
Egyptian letter bombs (Jan 1997) 41438
Empire State Building attacked by lone Palestinian (Feb 1997) 41486
Fall in murder rate (Jan 1997) 41437
Killings, Florida (Jan 1997) 41438
Murders in New York city statistics (Dec 1997) 41952
National Crime Vicitimization Survey (Nov 1997) 41903
Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) added to list of banned terrorist organisations (Oct 1997) 41865
Texas militia siege (Apr 1997) 41581; (May 1997) 41630
Senate:
Cabinet nominations confirmation hearings (Jan 1997) 41436
Campaign finance enquiry (Jul 1997) 41725
Campaign finance reform bill defeat due to Republican filibuster (Oct 1997) 41854
CIA leader confirmed (Jul 1997) 41727
Space research:
Abandonment of shuttle mission (Apr 1997) 41618
Delta-2 rocket failure (Jan 1997) 41475
Hubble (Feb 1997) 41522
Joint Mir mission (Apr 1997) 41618; (May 1997) 41666; (Jun 1997) 41718; (Jul 1997) 41757; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41845
Pathfinder mission to Mars (Jul 1997) 41757
Saturn probe (Oct 1997) 41893
Shuttle flights (Feb 1997) 41522; (May 1997) 41666; (Sep 1997) 41845
Supreme Court:
Euthanasia hearings (Jan 1997) 41437; (Jun 1997) 41677; (Oct 1997) 41854

UNITED STATES (contd)
No challenge to California's Proposition 209 on affirmative action (Nov 1997) 41903
Rulings
Assisted suicide (Jun 1997) 41677
Communications Decency Act struck down (Jun 1997) 41676
Gun laws (Jun 1997) 41676–7
President Clinton/Paula Jones sexual harassment case (Jan 1997) 41436; (May 1997) 41629
Presidential line-item veto (Apr 1997) 41580; (Jun 1997) 41677; (Aug 1997) 41764
Religious Freedom Restoration Act struct down (Jun 1997) 41676
Whitewater papers (Jun 1997) 41675
Texas:
Militia siege (Apr 1997) 41581; (May 1997) 41630
Tornado deaths (May 1997) 41630
Tobacco industry *see* Health
Trials:
see also Corruption; President: Whitewater affair
Black Panther released pending appeal (Jun 1997) 41677–8
Burmeister for murder of a black couple (Feb 1997) 41486; (Mar 1997) 41532
CIA and FBI agents (Jun 1997) 41677
Cisneros (former Housing Secretary) (Dec 1997) 41952
Dallas Roman Catholic diocese sexual abuse case (Jul 1997) 41728
Du Pont for murder (Jan 1997) 41438; (Feb 1997) 41486
Gigante (New York godfather) (Jul 1997) 41727; (Dec 1997) 41952
IBM computer sales to Russia investigation (Oct 1997) 41855
Kasi (killer of CIA employees) (Nov 1997) 41903; 41914
McDougal (Whitewater affair) (Apr 1997) 41579
McVeigh (Oklahoma bombing) (Apr 1997) 41581; (Jun 1997) 41676; (Jul 1997) 41727; (Aug 1997) 41765
Microsoft and anti-trust laws (Oct 1997) 41854–5; (Dec 1997) 41952
New York police officers (Sep 1997) 41808
Nichols (Oklahoma bombing) (Sep 1997) 41808; (Dec 1997) 41952
Oklahoma bombing lawsuits against US government (Apr 1997) 41581
Repetitive strain injury (RSI) damages award quashed (May 1997) 41629
Simpson, O.J. civil trial (Feb 1997) 41485–6
Texas "separatists" (Nov 1997) 41903
Tobacco industry cases (Mar 1997) 41531; (Apr 1997) 41580–1; (May 1997) 41629; (Jun 1997) 41677; (Jul 1997) 41727; (Aug 1997) 41765; (Oct 1997) 41854
Woodward (UK au-pair) murder case (Oct 1997) 41854; (Nov 1997) 41903
World Trade Center bombing (Aug 1997) 41765; (Nov 1997) 41903
UN:
Debt pledge (Jan 1997) 41474–5; (Feb 1997) 41484; (Jun 1997) 41717; (Sep 1997) 41845
Veto on budget arrears payments by Congress (Nov 1997) 41903
War crimes: Nazi gold laundering (Jul 1997) 41757
Washington DC: Financial rescue plan (Jan 1997) 41438; (Nov 1997) 41902
Welfare to work programme: (Feb 1997) 41483–4
World Bank: US contributions (Feb 1997) 41484

URUGUAY
Constitutional reform: (Jan 1997) 41440
Economy:
IMF credit (Jun 1997) 41679
Trade unions (May 1997) 41635
Human rights: Ruling on investigations of "disappeared" (Jun 1997) 41679
Security: Strikes and demonstrations (May 1997) 41635

UZBEKISTAN
see also CENTRAL ASIAN STATES; COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)
Appointments: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41818; (Oct 1997) 41866
Cabinet: (Sep 1997) 41818; (Oct 1997) 41866
Constitution: Political parties law (Jan 1997) 41452
Defence: US-Uzbek military manoeuvres (Jun 1997) 41693
Dismissals: Ministerial (Oct 1997) 41866
Economy: Agriculture (Oct 1997) 41866
Foreign relations:
Afghanistan (Dec 1997) 41966
USA (Jun 1997) 41693
President: Central Asian summit (Jul 1997) 41741

V

VANUATU
see also PACIFIC REGIONS
Abolition of post of Deputy Prime Minister: (Oct 1997) 41871
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41645
Armed forces: *see* Trials
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41645
Corruption: Ministers (May 1997) 41645
Dismissals: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41825; (Oct 1997) 41871
Economy: Reform programme (Sep 1997) 41825; (Oct 1997) 41871
Elections: Timetable (Nov 1997) 41920
Political parties: (May 1997) 41645
President: Dissolution of legislature (Nov 1997) 41920
Prime Minister: No-confidence motion (Nov 1997) 41920
Trials: Armed forces members acquitted of kidnapping President (May 1997) 41645

VATICAN
Death of Mother Teresa: (Sep 1997) 41820
Papal visits:
Bosnia-Herzegovina (Apr 1997) 41606
France (Aug 1997) 41783
Lebanon (May 1997) 41663
Poland (Jun 1997) 41707
Peru hostage crisis: (Jan 1997) 41439
Relations with:
Angola (Jul 1997) 41722–3
Israel (Nov 1997) 41937

VENEZUELA
Appointments:
Military (Jun 1997) 41683
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41534; (Jun 1997) 41683; (Dec 1997) 41957
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41534
Earthquake: (Jul 1997) 41729
Economy:
Austerity measures (Mar 1997) 41534
Finance Minister censured (Nov 1997) 41905
Foreign debt controversy (Nov 1997) 41905
Fifth Republican Movement: Launch of party by Chávez (former coup leader) (Jul 1997) 41729
Foreign relations: Jamaica (Nov 1997) 41907
President:
Health (Mar 1997) 41534
State of the nation address (Mar 1997) 41534
Resignations: Ministerial (Dec 1997) 41957
Security:
Demonstrations and violence (Mar 1997) 41534
Prison clashes and deaths (Aug 1997) 41769
Social Christian Party (COPEI): (Mar 1997) 41534

VIETNAM
Appointments:
Central bank (Oct 1997) 41867–8
Central committee advisors (Dec 1997) 41961
Communist Party general secretary (Dec 1997) 41961
Diplomatic (May 1997) 41642–3
Internet control board (May 1997) 41643

VIETNAM (contd)
Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41822
Armed forces: Reductions (Oct 1997) 41868
Aviation: Crash of Vietnamese airliner in Cambodia (Sep 1997) 41822
Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV): (Jan 1997) 41450–1; (Jul 1997) 41734; (Dec 1997) 41961
Corruption:
Arrests (Mar 1997) 41546
Businessman released (Nov 1997) 41917
Confiscation of church lands (Nov 1997) 41917
Death sentences (Jan 1997) 41450–1
Ethical guidelines for CPV members (Jan 1997) 41451
Council of Ministers: (Sep 1997) 41822
Death penalty: (Jan 1997) 41450–1; (May 1997) 41642; (Jul 1997) 41734; (Sep 1997) 41823
Drugs: Death penalty for trafficking (May 1997) 41642; (Sep 1997) 41823
Economy:
Asian Development Bank (ADB) loans (Mar 1997) 41546
Banking and credit reform (Dec 1997) 41961
Central bank (Oct 1997) 41867–8
Debt repayment (Jan 1997) 41451; (Mar 1997) 41546
Debt to Russia (Nov 1997) 41916
Donor aid pledged (Dec 1997) 41961
Energy projects (Dec 1997) 41961
Reform of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (Oct 1997) 41868
Regional currency crisis (Oct 1997) 41867–8
Road-building plan (Jan 1997) 41451
World Bank (Nov 1997) 41916–17
Elections: National Assembly (Jul 1997) 41734
Environment: Reforestation plans (Dec 1997) 41961
Foreign relations:
APEC membership (Nov 1997) 41919
China
Dispute over oil and gas reserves (Mar 1997) 41545–6; (Apr 1997) 41594; (Nov 1997) 41917
Visit of Do Muoi to China (Jul 1997) 41734
France (Nov 1997) 41916
Russia (Nov 1997) 41916
Thailand, Sea border treaty (Aug 1997) 41777
USA
Investment pact (Nov 1997) 41916
Military agreement and debt rescheduling (Mar 1997) 41546
US ambassador appointed (May 1997) 41642–3
Visit of US Secretary of State (Jun 1997) 41684
Foreign trade:
European Union (EU) (Nov 1997) 41916
Japan (Jan 1997) 41451
Human rights:
Imprisonment of "reactionary" activist (Nov 1997) 41917
Release of dissident (Sep 1997) 41823
Media:
Arrest of editor (Oct 1997) 41868
Internet restrictions (Mar 1997) 41546; (May 1997) 41643
National Assembly: Sessions (Sep 1997) 41822; (Dec 1997) 41961
Obituary of Bao Dai (last emperor): (Aug 1997) 41777
President: Tran Duc Luong appointed (Sep 1997) 41822
Religious affairs: Catholic Church (Nov 1997) 41917
Security:
Demonstrations and violence (Jan 1997) 41451; (Sep 1997) 41823; (Nov 1997) 41917
Peasant unrest in Military Zone Four reported in official newspaper (Sep 1997) 41822–3
Thai Binh province:
Government aid (Dec 1997) 41961
Social unrest (Sep 1997) 41822–3
Trials: Terrorism trial death sentences (Jul 1997) 41734
Typhoon Linda: (Nov 1997) 41917

VIRGIN ISLANDS *see* BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

VOLCANOES, Montserrat: (Jun 1997) 41682; (Aug 1997) 41768–9; (Sep 1997) 41813

W

WAR CRIMES
Bosnia-Herzegovina:
Djajic sentenced by German court (May 1997) 41654
Jongic sentenced by German court (Sep 1997) 41834
Misic (Nov 1997) 41933
Muslim paramilitaries (Nov 1997) 41933
S-For action against indicted criminals (Jul 1997) 41749; (Dec 1997) 41979
Suntic (Nov 1997) 41933
UN War Crimes Tribunal
Appeal by Erdemovic against sentence (Jan 1997) 41456
Blaskic (Jun 1997) 41704
Extradition of alleged war criminal from Croatia (Apr 1997) 41606
Kupreskic and Furundzija (Dec 1997) 41979
Surrender of Bosnian Croat war crimes suspects (Oct 1997) 41874–5
Tadic (May 1997) 41654
Trial of alleged Muslim and Croat war criminals (Mar 1997) 41556
Canada: Nazi gold laundering (Jul 1997) 41757
Croatia:
Bajramovic confession (Sep 1997) 41834
Croatian Serb suspect arrested (Jul 1997) 41749–50
Paraga's request that Tudjman be indicted (Aug 1997) 41791
Surrender of Bosnian Croats (Aug 1997) 41791; (Oct 1997) 41874; 41874–5
Vitez police chief (Aug 1997) 41791
Ethiopia: Italian apology (Dec 1997) 41949
France:
Commission to trace Jewish assets (Jan 1997) 41463; (Mar 1997) 41561
Papon (Jan 1997) 41475; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Oct 1997) 41884; 41893
Germany: Slave labour judgment (Nov 1997) 41941
Hungary: Agreement on implementation of 1947 Paris Peace Treaty (Mar 1997) 41553
Italy:
Apology to Ethiopia (Dec 1997) 41949
Priebke (Feb 1997) 41522; (Jul 1997) 41757
Japan:
Apology to China (Sep 1997) 41816
Chinese lawsuit over germ warfare (Aug 1997) 41771
Comfort women compensation (Jan 1997) 41445
Supreme Court ruling on school textbooks (Aug 1997) 41771
Lithuania: Gimzauskas indicted (Nov 1997) 41941
Poland: Ukraine-Poland reconciliation over war-time deportations of Ukrainians and killings of Poles (May 1997) 41657
Portugal: Nazi gold dealings investigation (Apr 1997) 41612; (Jul 1997) 41757
Rwanda: *see* UNITED NATIONS, Rwanda: Genocide tribunal
Sweden: Nazi gold allegations (Jan 1997) 41468
Switzerland:
Banks' role controversy (Jan 1997) 41461; (Jun 1997) 41718
Committee to investigate country's role (Feb 1997) 41512; (Mar 1997) 41554
Compensation fund for Holocaust victims (Jan 1997) 41461; (Feb 1997) 41511–12; (Mar 1997) 41554; (Apr 1997) 41612; (Nov 1997) 41941
Discovery of more Nazi-era funds (Jun 1997) 41718
Dormant accounts list (Jul 1997) 41757; (Oct 1997) 41893; (Nov 1997) 41941; (Dec 1997) 41984
Trustees appointed for dormant Swiss bank accounts (Sep 1997) 41845

3 8198 310 761 745
THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

WAR CRIMES (contd)
US report on Nazi gold (May 1997) 41666
UK:
Conference on Nazi gold (May 1997) 41666; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Dec 1997) 41984
Nazi gold report (May 1997) 41666
Sawoniuk (Sep 1997) 41845
Serafinowicz trial collapse (Jan 1997) 41475
USA: Nazi gold laundering (Jul 1997) 41757

WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION (WEU), Integration into EU proposal defeated: (Jun 1997) 41700

WESTERN SAHARA
Foreign relations:
Chad (May 1997) 41664
Guinea-Bissau (Apr 1997) 41616
Togo (Jun 1997) 41713
Polisario: Freeing of Moroccan prisoners of war (Apr 1997) 41616
Referendum agreement: (Sep 1997) 41843–4; (Oct 1997) 41892
UN:
Lisbon talks (Aug 1997) 41797
London talks (Jul 1997) 41756
Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) (Mar 1997) 41568; (May 1997) 41664; (Sep 1997) 41843–4; (Oct 1997) 41892
Special envoy (Mar 1997) 41568; (Apr 1997) 41616; (Jun 1997) 41713; (Aug 1997) 41797; (Sep 1997) 41843

WESTERN SAMOA
see also SAMOA
Change of name to Samoa: (Jul 1997) 41741
Constitution: (Mar 1997) 41548; (Jul 1997) 41741
Corruption: Passport sales controversy (May 1997) 41645
Foreign relations: New Zealand (May 1997) 41645
Media: (May 1997) 41645
Opposition leader banned from state television and radio: (May 1997) 41645

WEU *see* WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION (WEU)

WORLD BANK
Albania: (Apr 1997) 41597; (Oct 1997) 41876
Argentina: (May 1997) 41632
Armenia: (Aug 1997) 41788
Bolivia: (Dec 1997) 41955
Bosnia-Herzegovina: (Jun 1997) 41704–5
Brazil: (Dec 1997) 41955
Bulgaria: (May 1997) 41653; (Sep 1997) 41832; (Nov 1997) 49130
Corruption: Bank's campaign against (Sep 1997) 41844
Croatia: (Jul 1997) 41750
Currency markets study asked for by G-15 summit: (Nov 1997) 41941
Georgia: (Sep 1997) 41836
Guatemala: (Jan 1997) 41441
Hungary: (Mar 1997) 41554
Kenya: (Aug 1997) 41762
Korea, South (Dec 1997) 41957
Moldova: (Sep 1997) 41832; (Nov 1997) 41930
Mongolia: (Oct 1997) 41864
Nepal: (Dec 1997) 41964
Poland: (Jul 1997) 41750
Restructuring plan: (Feb 1997) 41522
Romania: (Apr 1997) 41606–7; (May 1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41706
Russia: (Apr 1997) 41609; (Jun 1997) 41708; (Dec 1997) 41975
Rwanda: (Dec 1997) 41947
Spring and autumn meetings: (Apr 1997) 41617–18; (Sep 1997) 41844
Tajikistan: (Nov 1997) 41913
Thailand: (Aug 1997) 41777
Uganda: Debt relief programme (Apr 1997) 41578
Ukraine: (Aug 1997) 41787
Vietnam (Nov 1997) 41916–17
Yemen: (Jun 1997) 41716; (Nov 1997) 41936
Zimbabwe: (Sep 1997) 41802

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)
Iraq: Malnutrition (Jun 1997) 41715
Korea, North famine appeal: (Apr 1997) 41593; (May 1997) 41641; (Jun 1997) 41689; (Jul 1997) 41737
Somalia: (Nov 1997) 41900; (Dec 1997) 41949

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO)
Director-General: (Apr 1997) 41618
Global epidemics of chronic diseases (cancer, heart disease, etc) warning: (May 1997) 41666
Iraq: Offices attacked (Oct 1997) 41888
Taiwan: Observer status application rejected (May 1997) 41639
Tuberculosis (TB) programme: (Mar 1997) 41570

WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS, Swiss bank boycott threat: (Jan 1997) 41461

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION (WTO)
European Union (EU): Banana imports ruling (May 1997) 41635; 41651; (Jun 1997) 41683; 41701; (Sep 1997) 41831
Information technology agreement: (Mar 1997) 41570
Liberalisation of financial services markets: (Sep 1997) 41823; (Nov 1997) 41919; (Dec 1997) 41984
Membership questions:
China (Oct 1997) 41860
Estonia (Oct 1997) 41881
Russia (Mar 1997) 41569
Taiwan (Feb 1997) 41494
Telecommunications agreement: (Feb 1997) 41522
USA/European Union (EU) dispute over Cuba sanctions: (Feb 1997) 41489–90; (Mar 1997) 41536; (Apr 1997) 41585; (Jun 1997) 41682; (Oct 1997) 41887

Y

YEMEN, REPUBLIC OF
Appointments: Ministerial (May 1997) 41663–4
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41663–4
Commonwealth membership application: (Oct 1997) 41892
Economy:
Budget (Jan 1997) 41473; (Dec 1997) 41981
Debt (Dec 1997) 41981
Donors' meeting (Jun 1997) 41716
Price rises (Nov 1997) 41936
Reform package (Nov 1997) 41936
Elections: General (Apr 1997) 41615
Espionage: (Dec 1997) 41980
Foreign relations:
European Union (EU) (Jun 1997) 41716
Saudi Arabia
Aden bombings allegations (Dec 1997) 41980–1
Armed clashes (Jul 1997) 41755–6
Saudi TV interview with Yemeni separatist (Jul 1997) 41756
Spain (Dec 1997) 41980
UK (Nov 1997) 41936
General People's Congress (GPC): (Jan 1997) 41473; (Apr 1997) 41615; (May 1997) 41663–4
Map: (Apr 1997) 41615
National Opposition Front (London-based opposition group): (Jul 1997) 41756
Political parties: (Apr 1997) 41615
President:
Promotion to Field Marshal endorsed by House of Representatives (Dec 1997) 41981
Visit to UK (Nov 1997) 41936
Security:
Arrests of opposition leaders (Jul 1997) 41756
Bomb explosions in Aden (Jul 1997) 41756; (Nov 1997) 41936; (Dec 1997) 41980–1
Demonstrations and violence (Nov 1997) 41936
Election violence (Apr 1997) 41615
Kidnappings of foreigners (Nov 1997) 41936
Southern secessionists (Jul 1997) 41756
Trials: (Nov 1997) 41936; (Dec 1997) 41980–1

YEMEN, REPUBLIC OF (contd)
Yemen Socialist Party (YSP): (Apr 1997) 41615
Yemeni Alliance for Reform (al-Islah): (Jan 1997) 41473; (Apr 1997) 41615

YUGOSLAVIA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF
Appointments:
Deputy Prime Minister (Nov 1997) 41933
Ministerial (Mar 1997) 41554–5
Arms trade with: China (Nov 1997) 41933
Cabinet: (Mar 1997) 41554–5
Defence:
Armed forces, Relations with President Milosevic (Jan 1997) 41455
Supreme Defence Council (Jan 1997) 41455
Elections:
Presidential
Candidates (May 1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41705
Milosevic elected (Jul 1997) 41748
Foreign relations:
Albania (Nov 1997) 41934
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Accord with Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serbs) (Mar 1997) 41555
China (Nov 1997) 41933
Contact Group (Jan 1997) 41455
Croatia (Sep 1997) 41834
Russia (Dec 1997) 41978
USA (May 1997) 41655
Kosovo:
Crete summit of south-eastern European countries (Nov 1997) 41934
Demonstrations (Oct 1997) 41875
Elections for Serbian president (Dec 1997) 41978
Montenegro:
Constitutional court ruling on republican presidential candidates (Aug 1997) 41790
Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (SDPCG) (Mar 1997) 41555; (Jun 1997) 41705; (Jul 1997) 41748; (Aug 1997) 41790
Elections
Presidential
Candidates (Aug 1997) 41790
Results (Oct 1997) 41875
Foreign relations, Bosnia-Herzegovina (Oct 1997) 41875
Obituary of Minister (Jan 1997) 41455
Political parties (Oct 1997) 41875
Political unrest (Aug 1997) 41790
Prime Minister
Criticism of Milosevic (Feb 1997) 41504
Djukanovic ousted (Mar 1997) 41555
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): Serbian elections (Jan 1997) 41455; (Feb 1997) 41503; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41875; (Dec 1997) 41978
President:
Election of Milosevic (Jul 1997) 41748
Visits to, China (Nov 1997) 41933
Racial issues:
Ethnic Albanians (Oct 1997) 41875
Killing of Romani youth (Oct 1997) 41875
Security:
Killings
Romani youth (Oct 1997) 41875
YUL secretary-general (Oct 1997) 41875
Student demonstrations in Kosovo (Oct 1997) 41875
Serbia:
Appointments, Ministerial (Feb 1997) 41503–4; (Jul 1997) 41748
Cabinet (Feb 1997) 41503–4; (Jul 1997) 41748
Elections
Legislative (Sep 1997) 41832–3
Municipal
OSCE report (Jan 1997) 41455; (Feb 1997) 41503
Reinstatement of Zajedno victories (Feb 1997) 41503
Presidential (Jul 1997) 41748; (Sep 1997) 41832–3; (Oct 1997) 41875; (Dec 1997) 41978
Foreign relations
Croatia, Rail link re-opened (Nov 1997) 41932
Greece (Jan 1997) 41455

YUGOSLAVIA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF (contd)
Turkey (Jun 1997) 41703
USA (Feb 1997) 41503
Foreign trade, USA (Jan 1997) 41455
Kosovo, Intercommunal talks (Apr 1997) 41606
Media (Feb 1997) 41503; (Mar 1997) 41555; (Apr 1997) 41606
Orthodox Church, Support for opposition (Jan 1997) 41454–5
Political parties (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41875; (Dec 1997) 41978
President
Contact Group meeting (Jan 1997) 41455
Criticised by Montenegrin prime minister (Feb 1997) 41504
Milosevic candidacy for Federal President (Jun 1997) 41705; (Jul 1997) 41748
Recognition of opposition victories (Feb 1997) 41503
Relations with Yugoslav army (Jan 1997) 41455
Resignation of Milosevic (Jul 1997) 41748
Resignations (Mar 1997) 41555; (Jul 1997) 41748
Security
Demonstrations (Jan 1997) 41454–5; (Feb 1997) 41503–4; (Mar 1997) 41555
Killing of Serbian minister (Apr 1997) 41606
Police crackdown on demonstrators (Feb 1997) 41503
Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) (Jan 1997) 41454; (Jun 1997) 41705; (Sep 1997) 41833
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) (Jan 1997) 41455; (Jun 1997) 41705; (Jul 1997) 41748; (Sep 1997) 41833; (Oct 1997) 41875; (Dec 1997) 41978
Supreme Court, Municipal elections ruling (Jan 1997) 41455
Zajedno opposition coalition (Jan 1997) 41454–5; (Feb 1997) 41503; (Mar 1997) 41555; (May 1997) 41655; (Jun 1997) 41705; (Jul 1997) 41748
Yugoslav United Left (YUL): (Oct 1997) 41875; (Dec 1997) 41978

Z

ZAÏRE
see also CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre (ADFL):
Advances (Feb 1997) 41477; (Mar 1997) 41525; (Apr 1997) 41573
Dissension (Jan 1997) 41431
Entry into Kinshasa (May 1997) 41621
Funding of rebellion (Jan 1997) 41431
Government appointments (May 1997) 41622
Human rights abuses reported (Apr 1997) 41573
Kabila
Agreement to talk with Mobutu (Apr 1997) 41573
Announcement of Democratic Republic of Congo (May 1997) 41621–2
Disarming of Mai Mai warriors (Jan 1997) 41431
Rejection of UN ceasefire plan (Mar 1997) 41525
Repatriation of refugees called for (Mar 1997) 41526
Talks with
Mobutu (May 1997) 41621
South African President (Feb 1997) 41477; (Apr 1997) 41573
Kisangani taken (Mar 1997) 41525
Appointments:
Ministerial (May 1997) 41622
Prime Minister (Apr 1997) 41573
Armed forces: Government use of foreign mercenaries (Jan 1997) 41431

ZAÏRE (contd)
Cabinet: (May 1997) 41622
Civil war:
Bunia and gold-mines seized (Jan 1997) 41431
Evacuation of foreigners (May 1997) 41621
Fall of Mobutu (May 1997) 41621
Kisangani fall (Mar 1997) 41525
Lubumbashi fall (Apr 1997) 41573
Peace talks (Feb 1997) 41477
Rebel gains (Feb 1997) 41477; (Mar 1997) 41525; (Apr 1997) 41573
Reports of fighting among rebel groups (Jan 1997) 41431
Use of mercenaries (Feb 1997) 41477
Constituent assembly: (May 1997) 41621
Foreign relations:
Angola (May 1997) 41621; (Jun 1997) 41670–1
Belgium (May 1997) 41622
Congo (May 1997) 41621
European Union (EU) (Apr 1997) 41473
France (Jan 1997) 41431; (May 1997) 41622; (Aug 1997) 41763
Morocco (Feb 1997) 41477
Rwanda
Kabila call for repatriation of refugees (Mar 1997) 41526
Welcome to Kabila regime (May 1997) 41621
South Africa (Feb 1997) 41477; (Apr 1997) 41573
Uganda (Jan 1997) 41431; (Feb 1997) 41477; (May 1997) 41621
UK (May 1997) 41622
USA (Apr 1997) 41473; (May 1997) 41621
Human rights: Massacres of Rwandan refugees by ADFL forces reported (Apr 1997) 41573; (Jun 1997) 41669
Map: (Mar 1997) 41525
Patriotic Front: Government appointments (May 1997) 41622
Political parties: (May 1997) 41622
Popular Revolutionary Movement (MPR): Offer of power-sharing rejected by ADFL (Mar 1997) 41525
President:
Kabila, Inauguration (May 1997) 41622
Mobutu
Fall (May 1997) 41621
Payment of foreign mercenaries (Jan 1997) 41431; (Feb 1997) 41477
Refusal to stand down (Apr 1997) 41573
Return to Kinshasa (Mar 1997) 41525
Talks with Kabila (May 1997) 41621
Visits to
France for further surgery (Jan 1997) 41431
Morocco (Feb 1997) 41477
Prime Minister:
Abolition of post (May 1997) 41622
Resignation of Kengo (Mar 1997) 41525; (Apr 1997) 41573
Tshisekedi appointed and dismissed (Apr 1997) 41573
Refugees:
Conditions (Feb 1997) 41477
Kabila call for repatriation of refugees to Rwanda (Mar 1997) 41526
Presence of Interahamwe and armed extremist Hutus (Feb 1997) 41477
UN plan to airlift Rwandan Hutus back to Goma (Apr 1997) 41573
Resignations: Prime Minister Kengo (Mar 1997) 41525
Security: Restrictions on political parties (May 1997) 41622
UN:
Ceasefire plan rejected by Kabila (Mar 1997) 41525
Inquiry into massacre allegations (Jun 1997) 41669
Refugee airlift plan (Apr 1997) 41573

ZAÏRE (contd)
Special envoy's talks with Kabila (May 1997) 41622
Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS):
Government appointments (May 1997) 41622
Welcome to Kabila regime (May 1997) 41621

ZAMBIA
Appointments: Ministerial (Sep 1997) 41801; (Dec 1997) 41948
Cabinet: (Sep 1997) 41801; (Dec 1997) 41948
Economy:
Budget (Feb 1997) 41478; (Jun 1997) 41675
Copper agreement (Feb 1997) 41478
IMF (Jun 1997) 41675
Privatisation (Feb 1997) 41478
Foreign relations: Angola (Apr 1997) 41576
Human rights: (Nov 1997) 41897
Kaunda:
Chiluba accused of staging coup attempt as pretext for quashing political opposition (Oct 1997) 41851
Detained without charge in connection with failed coup plot (Dec 1997) 41948
Injured in attack (Aug 1997) 41758–9
Liberal Progressive Front: (Aug 1997) 41758–9
President:
Broadcasts to nation following abortive coup attempt by Lungu (Oct 1997) 41850–1
Denial of involvement in attack on Kaunda (Aug 1997) 41758–9
Visit to Angola (Apr 1997) 41576
Security:
Coup attempt by Lungu (Oct 1997) 41850–1
Kaunda (former president) injured in attack (Aug 1997) 41758–9
Riots in Lusaka (Aug 1997) 41759
United National Independence Party (UNIP): (Aug 1997) 41758–9; (Oct 1997) 41851
Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC): (Nov 1997) 41897

ZIMBABWE
Appointments: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41721–2
Banana, Rev. Canaan:
Homosexuality allegations (Feb 1997) 41478–9; (May 1997) 41623; (Jul 1997) 41722
Trial (Sep 1997) 41802
Cabinet: (Jul 1997) 41721–2
Constitutional questions: (Feb 1997) 41478
Corruption: Ministerial (Jul 1997) 41722
Economy:
Agricultural tax proposals (Jul 1997) 41722
Budget (Sep 1997) 41801–2
Government spending cutbacks (Jul 1997) 41721–2
IMF (Sep 1997) 41801
Land acquisition legislation expansion (Jul 1997) 41722; (Oct 1997) 41850; (Nov 1997) 41898
World Bank (Sep 1997) 41802
Environment: Ivory trade (Jun 1997) 41717
Foreign relations:
Burundi (Sep 1997) 41801
UK (Oct 1997) 41850
Human rights: (May 1997) 41624
Matabeleland: Atrocities investigation (May 1997) 41624
Organisation of African Unity (OAU): Summit (Jun 1997) 41674
President: Land acquisition programme pledge (Oct 1997) 41850
Resignations: Ministerial (May 1997) 41624
Supreme Court: Government's powers ruling (Feb 1997) 41478
Trials:
Dube murder trial (Feb 1997) 41478–9
Sithole treason charges (Nov 1997) 41898; (Dec 1997) 41948